This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

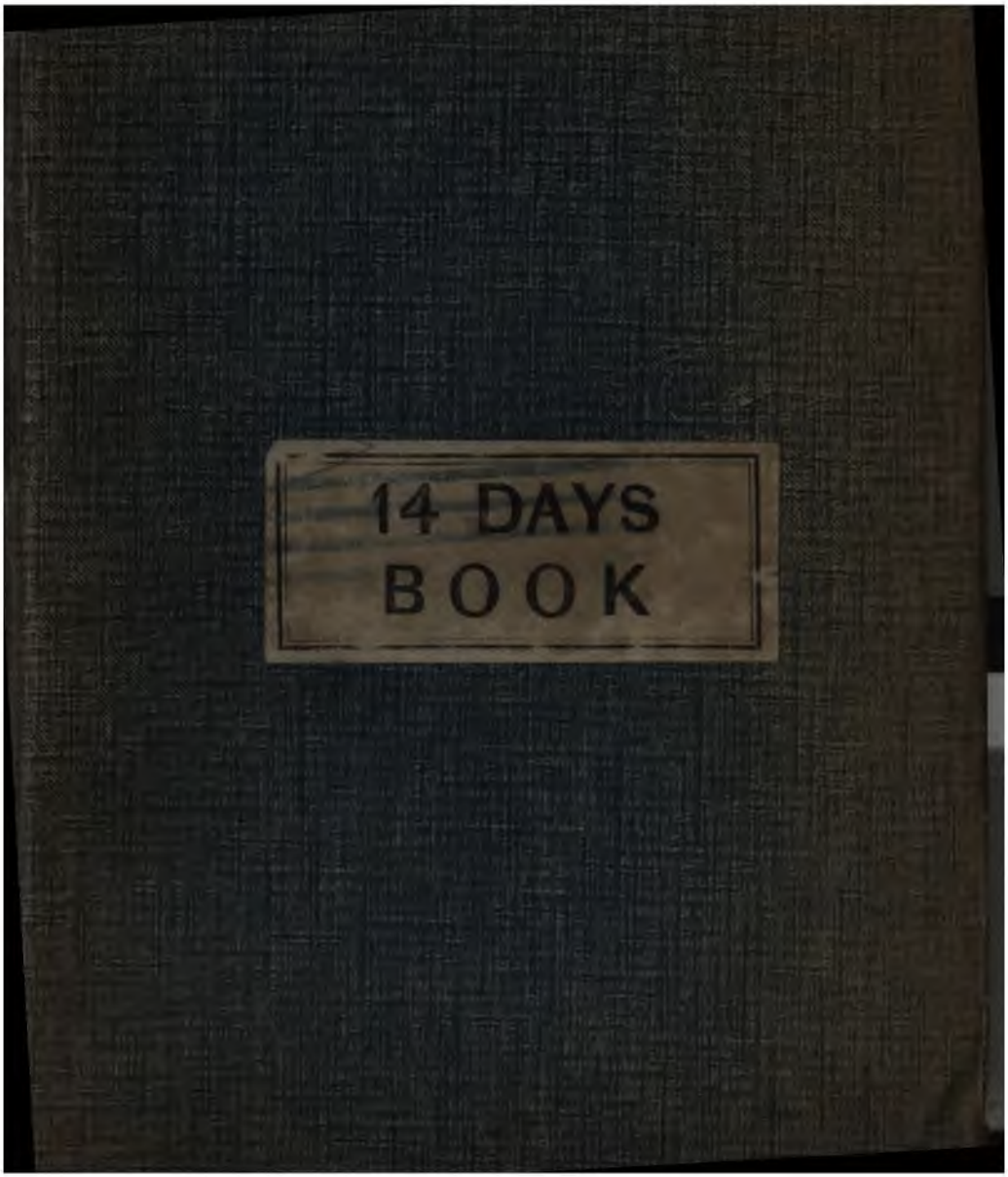
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


14 DAYS
BOOK

23498.24

Harvard College Library

FROM

J. E. Chase.

Boston.

F. E. Clarke

6/22/02.

TWO STAGE PLAYS: DENZILL HERBERT'S ATONEMENT; BONDAGE

TWO STAGE PLAYS: DENZILL HERBERT'S ATONEMENT; BONDAGE. BY LUCY SNOWE

LONDON: R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON, 8 YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI. 1900

23498.21

F. E. Chase
Boston

All rights reserved

DENZILL HERBERT'S ATONEMENT

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE REV. DENZILL HERBERT.
HARRY FIELD.
RALPH CHAMPNEYS.
RACHEL HERBERT, *Wife of Denzill.*
LADY DELORAINE, *Sister of Ralph.*
MARY FIELD, *Sister of Harry.*
SUSAN ARCHER.

DENZILL HERBERT'S ATONEMENT

ACT I

Outside DENZILL HERBERT'S *church in London. Steps leading down from church door to iron gate,* L. *Iron railings round churchyard. Seat inside railings, on which* SUSAN ARCHER *is sitting. She is dressed like a respectable working woman, but with a vulgarly fine hat. She is handsome, in the 'cheeks as red as a pulpit-cushion' style.* RALPH CHAMPNEYS *strolls up to church gate. The organ sounds. He looks at his watch, and then at the church door.* HARRY FIELD *comes out from the churchyard, also strolling.*

RALPH.

Que diable? You, Harry, 'dans cette galère'?

HARRY.

You, Ralph? Is Saul also——

RALPH.

Going to church? Not exactly. If you weren't such a confounded heathen, you'd know that prayer time was just over.

HARRY.

And church parade just on? I understand that much of Christian ceremonies. At any rate, I guessed it when I caught sight of you.

RALPH.

I didn't guess it when I caught sight of *you.*

(*They look each other up and down.* HARRY *is dressed in Anarchist fashion, with a slouch hat and cloak;* RALPH *in the extreme of the mode.*)

HARRY.

Yes, there *is* a difference. I've only come to look on at the show.

RALPH (*sharply*).

Ah! you've come with a purpose?

HARRY (*embarrassed*).

I had to make some excuse.

RALPH.

There's no excuse for being vilely dressed.

HARRY.

Not even poverty?

RALPH.

I like that! Which of us two can plead most poverty?—I, who have nothing but my debts to live on, or you——

HARRY.

Or I, who live on nothing but my earnings, or, rather, the earnings of the *Daily Monitor*?

RALPH.

And you can afford to keep a sister?

HARRY.

My sister 'keeps' herself.

RALPH.

I'd be quite willing for *my* sister to 'keep' me, but she only gives me Sunday luncheon. That's what I'm waiting for. She's in there (*indicating the church*).

HARRY.

Lady Deloraine?

RALPH.

The same. One of the drones that you busy bees would like to sting to death; but without whom, I'm bound to say, life would be an uglier thing than it is for most of us.

HARRY (*warmly*).

I don't want to lessen the number of beautiful women in the world.

RALPH (*significantly*).

Well, if you want to *see* them, they're mostly to be seen in there (*indicating church*).

HARRY (*with affected carelessness*).

Yes, I suppose wherever the parson is——

(*During their conversation he keeps glancing at the church door, unconscious that* RALPH *is observing him.*)

RALPH.

There will the beauties be gathered together. Quite so! My dear boy, you're an awfully poor actor, you know. *Who is it?*

HARRY.

Who? the parson? Oh, the name's on the board somewhere. (*Reads*) 'The Rev. Denzill Herbert.' What a name for a popular priest!

RALPH.

I meant which of the beauties do you admire the most?

HARRY (*hotly*).

I don't discuss women's 'points'; they're not horses.

RALPH.

There's a lot in their breeding, all the same. If you sociologists understood that, you'd begin your reforms at the beginning.

HARRY.

Where's that?

RALPH.

Don't go and marry a frump, that's all

HARRY.

I don't think of marrying.

RALPH.

Or whatever the new patent relation between the sexes may be. I don't pretend to understand 'em. The old ways are good enough for me.

HARRY.

The old ways of lust and license for men, and slavery for women.

RALPH.

Sh! sh! we're not in church. Moderate your ecstasies, my dear.

(SUSAN *comes out from churchyard and approaches* RALPH.)

SUSAN (*to* RALPH).

If you please, sir, can you tell me if this is Mr. Denzill's church?

HARRY (*lifting his hat*)

Mr. *Herbert's.*

SUSAN.

Oh, thank you, sir. I meant to say Mr. Herbert. He's a very good clergyman, isn't he, sir?

RALPH (*with mock politeness, travestying* HARRY'S).

If you look inside the church, you can see for yourself how crowded it is.

HARRY (*in a tone of equality*).

He's a very popular preacher.

RALPH.

Especially among ladies.

SUSAN (*meekly*).

Thank you, sir.

(*She goes back to her seat.*)

RALPH.

One of the 'slaves.'

HARRY (*with conviction*).

Yes.

RALPH.

Rather more of an 'enslaver,' I guess. Your Don Quixote air was lost upon her. She didn't care for the cut of your clothes. She liked me better.

HARRY (*laughing*).

Ribald!

(*The organ sounds. The church doors open and people begin to stream out.* RALPH *and* HARRY *stand aside and watch them pass. Two ladies pass, a mother and daughter.*)

MOTHER.

I think you may be satisfied with your cloak now, Blanche. Did you see Lady Deloraine had one just like it?

DAUGHTER

Yes, mother, I noticed it directly.

(*They go out. Two ladies pass.*)

FIRST LADY.

A lot of smart people, weren't there?

SECOND LADY.

Quite smart. As good as the Opera. And the singing, too.

THIRD LADY (*meeting them*).

Isn't Mr. Herbert a dear?

FIRST LADY.

Like a picture! A Velasquez or a Raphael or something.

SECOND LADY.

Is he married?

FIRST LADY.

Fortunately.

SECOND LADY.

Unfortunately—for some of us.

FIRST LADY.

Fortunately for *him*. Think what a life he would lead!

THIRD LADY.

After all, marriage doesn't make so *very* much difference nowadays.

FIRST LADY.

With all these novels—about divorce—and all that!

THIRD LADY (*significantly*).

Yes, about *divorce!*

(*They go out. Two young men pass.*)

FIRST MAN.

Rattling good sermon that!

SECOND MAN.

Ripping! Guess he's knocked about a bit himself, don't you?

FIRST MAN.

Rather!

(*They go out. Another group of ladies come from the church.*)

FIRST LADY.

Isn't he *wonderful?* I've not heard anything that moved me so since—since Paderewski.

SECOND LADY.

Don't speak of it! I shall *never* forget—*never*—the way he said—— Oh, look! Isn't that the Duchess?

THIRD LADY.

Sh! You know he said we were not to talk about 'notorious sinners.'

FIRST LADY.

But how *singular!* And how singularly appropriate! How she must have felt!

THIRD LADY.

She must have felt like what he called an 'obscure saint.'

(*They laugh and go out.* RALPH *and* HARRY *come forward.*)

RALPH.

Not a bad show, eh?

HARRY.

Yes, a good *show* for your money. This is priestcraft

RALPH.

No, it's only a good-looking man and a certain kind of women. You could do the trick yourself. So could I—if we chose.

HARRY.

Do you mean to say those women would come and listen to *me?*

RALPH.

Why not? Hallo! there's a woman of another guess kind.

HARRY.

That's my sister.

(MARY FIELD *comes from the street,* R. *She carries a bundle of circulars, which she offers to people as they come out of church. On reaching* RALPH, *she offers one to him, not seeing* HARRY.)

HARRY.

Stop that, Mary. This is Ralph Champneys, the man I've often told you about.

MARY.

Your college friend? I'm glad to see you. (*Shakes hands with* RALPH.)

RALPH (*with studious but indifferent politeness*).

Delighted!

(MARY *is dressed in a mushroom hat and uncompromising cloak, and looks obviously 'advanced.'*)

HARRY (*to* MARY).

It's no use offering that sort of thing to *him*. You might as well try to feed a canary bird on cold mutton.

RALPH (*taking the circular*).

Never mind him, Miss Field. The canary bird is grateful for any food you give him. (*Reading circular*) What's this? 'Parsons and Profligates. A Lecture by Harry Field, Socialist, 3 p.m., Hyde Park, this (Sunday) afternoon.' Is it even so? And once I called this man 'friend'! I told you you could do the trick if you tried, but I'm damned if I thought you were at it already.

HARRY.

It's not the same 'trick,' as you call it

RALPH.

Don't you flatter yourself! Proof! What do you bet that I bring some of these ladies to hear you this very afternoon? They'll be dying for some fresh excitement by this afternoon.

HARRY.

Then, let them die—for me.

RALPH.

I'll bring my sister for one. There she is at last. Ta-ta!

(LADY DELORAINE *comes slowly down the steps, looking much moved. She is small and lithe, and beautifully dressed.*)

RALPH (*meeting* LADY DELORAINE).

Well, had a good concert?

LADY DELORAINE.

Don't, Ralph, mock at serious things.

RALPH.

I wouldn't if it were serious.

LADY DELORAINE.

You always say that, when you know that I——

RALPH.

You always *are* serious—about something fresh every week.

LADY DELORAINE.

Because never before have I—— But it's no use talking to you.

RALPH.

Not the least in the world before luncheon; I'm deuced hungry.

LADY DELORAINE.

How vulgar of you! I never want to eat again. If you could only understand what I've been through! I'm simply worn out with feeling. Oh, Ralph, be kind to me. You know what I have to bear. Now here at last is a man who *understands* me, who understands *women!* I could—I *must* tell him everything.

RALPH (*kindly*).

Well, do!

LADY DELORAINE (*mysteriously*).

Ralph, let me whisper something — something terrible! I have just discovered—I know now what I was meant for.

RALPH.

What was that?

LADY DELORAINE (*with emotion*).

To be wife of—*a clergyman!*

RALPH.

Sorry it's too late. (*Looking at watch*) Do you know it's two o'clock?

LADY DELORAINE (*fussy and nervous*).

Ah, how *cross* George will be, like the bear that he is, to be kept waiting! Where's the carriage? Oh, I forgot: I've determined never to use a carriage on Sunday again. Mr. Herbert says it's so shameful the way we treat our servants on Sunday. Well, we must walk, and I'm *so* tired.

RALPH.

Nonsense! we must have a cab. You can't possibly walk.

(*They go out,* L. HARRY *has been walking restlessly about, eagerly watching the passers-by as if looking for someone.* MARY *stands* R., *still distributing circulars.* HARRY *comes back to her.*)

MARY (*softly*).

Hasn't she come out *yet?*

HARRY.

Not yet.

MARY.

There was such a crowd. Perhaps you missed——

HARRY.

Missed! Do you think I could mistake?

MARY.

She may not have been there

HARRY

She's always there—every Sunday—ever since I——

MARY.

She might be ill.

HARRY.

With *that* physique! Sh! don't speak so loud. There she is!

(RACHEL HERBERT *is seen coming down the church steps. She is tall and noble-looking, youthful and enthusiastic, with a dreamy, spiritual air, but full of vigour.* HARRY *carefully turns his back as she comes nearer.*)

MARY (*looking ostentatiously away from the church*).

Where?

HARRY.

Coming down the steps! Don't stare so!

MARY.

I'm not staring. (*Goes towards church steps.*)

HARRY (*pulling her back*).

What *are* you doing?

MARY.

I'm going to offer her one of the circulars.

HARRY.

Mary! Mary! Come back! Too late!
(*He follows her.*)

MARY (*to* RACHEL).

Will you take one of these papers?

RACHEL (*taking circular*).

Thank you. (*Reads the circular.*) Ah! I thought you were offering me a tract. (*Looks at the circular again.*)

MARY (*persistent*).

Will you come to the lecture?

RACHEL (*wondering*).

Come to the lecture?

MARY.

This lecture (*indicating circular*) Mr. Harry Field is to give in the Park this afternoon.

RACHEL.

Why do you ask me?

MARY.

You would hear the other side. You have been to church, haven't you? You would hear, at the lecture, what *outsiders* think about the church and the parsons.

RACHEL.

Outsiders? you mean those who are not Christians.

MARY.

Of course.

RACHEL.

But I am a Christian.

MARY.

And so you are *afraid*—afraid to hear the other side.

RACHEL (*interested, but with conviction*).

There *is* no other side.

MARY.

Don't you know that *most* people stay outside even of a fashionable church like this?

HARRY (*he has just reached them, and overhears the last words. He speaks sotto voce*).

Mary, come away, pray; you're troubling this lady.

RACHEL (*sweetly, to them both*).

No; I want to hear what you have to say. I—I wish I could do what you ask. But I want to tell you first of all this is *not* a fashionable church.

HARRY.

Isn't Mr. Herbert what is called a 'popular clergyman?

RACHEL (*turning to* HARRY).

The clergyman is only the appointed minister. What he is himself is of no consequence.

HARRY.

Even if he were a notorious scamp?

RACHEL.

Would you not accept a loaf of bread from even a bad man, if you were hungry?

HARRY.

That is just the sort of talk, the sort of idea, that I am trying to combat.

RACHEL

You?

(*As they talk,* MARY *gradually withdraws, and leaves them alone together.*)

HARRY.

I am giving lectures on clergymen, and their methods and ideals.

RACHEL (*looking at the circular*).

Then, this is *your* name—Mr. Harry Field?

HARRY.

Yes.

RACHEL.

And you are attacking the clergy? Why?

HARRY.

Because they're such a set of liars and humbugs.

RACHEL.

A preacher must persuade others to be better than he knows himself to be.

HARRY.

Of course! What *I* complain of in the clergy is that they don't *think* straight. I don't care about their private life.

RACHEL.

I wish you would come to see my husband.

HARRY (*recoiling*).

Your *husband ?*

RACHEL.

Mr. Herbert, the clergyman here, is my husband. He would know better what to say than I do. He has helped so many young men. He understands them so well.

HARRY (*with intention*).

He was perhaps once a young man himself.

RACHEL (*simply and sweetly*).

He is not very old even yet. Do come !

HARRY.

You ask me to come to be helped ?

RACHEL.

I ask you to come.

HARRY (*enthusiastically*).

How kind ! how *good !* But if I don't need help ?

RACHEL.

Are you a Christian ?

HARRY.

No.

RACHEL.

And are you happy?

HARRY.

Can one be happy when one sees all the misery?

RACHEL.

The Church—religion—has a remedy for the misery.

HARRY.

Ay, in another world—if we could believe in that. They hold us, the masses, off from all the good things of *this* life with that bait, while they take care to get those, too, for themselves.

RACHEL (*half convinced*).

We *have* the good things of this world. But is that our fault?

HARRY.

Oh, pray forgive me! Whatever you—whoever you—think well of—must be—(*stammering*) different!

RACHEL (*considering*).

I should like him to see you. I should like you to talk to him.

HARRY.

May I? Thanks—thanks—wh-when?

RACHEL.

To-morrow, at four o'clock. Ask for *me* if you like.

HARRY (*in a dream*).

For *you*?

RACHEL.

Good-bye, then, till to-morrow.

[*She goes out* R.

MARY (*coming forward again*).

Has she converted you?

HARRY.

Don't! (*groaning*). She's *married!*

MARY.

Oh, well!

HARRY.

To that damned parson! Could you believe such a thing?

MARY.

I should have thought it very likely.

HARRY.

It's all your fault.

MARY.

My fault that she's married? How can you say such a thing?

HARRY.

That I found out? I need never have known.

MARY.

It gives you all the better chance of seeing her.

HARRY.

What comfort is there in that?

MARY.

Perhaps she hates him.

HARRY.

Why, she was cracking him up for a paragon of parsons the whole time.

MARY.

That's not a bad sign. I'm much too fond of *you* to crack you up.

HARRY.

That's different. You're a superior woman!

MARY.

Isn't *she*? I wonder if we shall ever see her again.

HARRY (*off-handedly*).

There's no difficulty about that; she's asked me to go.

MARY.

She must have been taken by you. Then you can slaughter her husband.

HARRY.

That's what she's invited me to do, to slaughter him in argument—at least, for him to slaughter me.

MARY.

Harry, what luck you have!

HARRY

She only takes compassion on me because she thinks I'm an awful sinner.

MARY.

I see, the old-fashioned sort of woman! When shall you go?

HARRY.

Oh, I don't suppose I shall go at all.

MARY.

Well, come home now; you'll be late for your lecture else. There's the parson himself coming out of church.

HARRY (*glancing up at steps*).

Brute he looks!

(*They go out.* DENZILL HERBERT *comes down the steps alone. He is about thirty-two, handsome, of the 'Christ-like' type. He walks slowly and wearily, but with something of self-consciousness.* SUSAN ARCHER, *who has been watching the steps, slips out of the gate as he comes down and turns to face him just as he gets into the street.*)

DENZILL (*stopping short as* SUSAN *places herself in his way*).

Do you want me?

SUSAN.

I want to *see* you, to look at you.

DENZILL (*quietly, but with suppressed fear*).

Well—I am here.

(*He stands while she looks him up and down.*)

SUSAN.

You've improved in looks. You're a young man still, handsomer than ever you were.

DENZILL.

If you've nothing more to say, let me pass.

SUSAN.

I've only *one* thing to say. You're married!

DENZILL.

I told you so.

SUSAN.

Oh yes, you've been very open and aboveboard with *me*. But what about *her*? Does *she* know you as well as I do? Does she know about *me*?

DENZILL.

I deny your right to ask that question.

SUSAN.

Oh, well, I can easily find out if you won't answer.

DENZILL.

If this is an attempt to levy blackmail, let me tell you it's useless. I've fulfilled all my obligations to you. I shall do no more.

SUSAN.

Did I ask for anything? I know you've done all you could. You've behaved handsome. *I* don't complain.

DENZILL.

God knows I can never *forget*. It is my punishment to remember always. But (*changing his tone*) we can repent, both of us.

SUSAN.

You haven't answered me.

DENZILL.

I have given you my answer.

SUSAN.

You'd better, *Denzill;* it'll be better for you to tell me the truth.

DENZILL.

Let me pass. I have nothing more to say to you.

SUSAN.

You're a coward, that's what you are! You're afraid of me—poor Susan Archer—a nobody like me!

DENZILL.

I'm not afr——

SUSAN.

Run away from me, then! You daren't! I can keep you standing here as long as I choose.

DENZILL.

I'm not afraid of *you*—I'm——

SUSAN.

Well, you've told me what I wanted. I can see you've kept your secret. She doesn't know; that's why you're in such a jolly fright.

DENZILL (*desperately*).

And what *then*?

SUSAN.

Other people have tongues besides you, or they could write letters.

DENZILL.

Do you mean that you——

SUSAN.

I *might*—if I was put to it.

DENZILL (*groaning*).

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me! (*Conciliating*) Susan, I—I admit—I owe you—I owe you much. Come and see me—to-morrow—and let us talk it over.

SUSAN.

To-morrow?

DENZILL.

It's my day for seeing people. Promise me till then to let things be.

SUSAN (*softly*).

I only want a chance to see you and talk to you, Denzill.

DENZILL (*holding out his hand*).

Good-bye, then, till to-morrow.

(*She goes out* L. *without taking his hand.* RACHEL *comes back* R.)

RACHEL (*coming up to* DENZILL).

Only just out, dear? Have people been troubling you with their worries?

DENZILL.

It's my own worries that are troubling me.

RACHEL (*with forced sympathy*).

You must tell me about them!

DENZILL (*unnerved*)

God forbid! I mean—I must worry through by myself.

RACHEL.

I've just seen someone else I want you to help.

DENZILL (*startled*).

Who?

RACHEL.

A very nice young man.

DENZILL (*repeats mechanically*).

A very nice young man.

(*He stares at her, not knowing what he does.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

DENZILL HERBERT'S *study, a luxuriously furnished room. Oxford table* R. *with crucifix. Tea-table with tea-things and low chairs.*

RACHEL. HARRY.

RACHEL.

I'm so glad you came.

HARRY (*nervous*).

Oh, thank you—thank you ever so much!

RACHEL (*leaning forward*).

I wanted you to see my husband.

HARRY (*standing up*).

I think I ought to tell you something, Mrs. Herbert.

RACHEL.

Yes?

HARRY (*blurting out*).

Well, I *didn't* want to see your husband.

RACHEL (*conventionally*).

I ought to have said I wanted *him* to have the pleasure of meeting you.

HARRY (*still rough and abrupt*).

Oh, say the truth. Don't pay me compliments, *please.*

RACHEL (*surprised*).

It is quite true. I thought it would do him good to see someone who had a different way of looking at things. He enjoyed talking to you.

HARRY.

I thought you wanted him to convert me.

RACHEL.

I hoped you might get something from him, too.

HARRY.

Forgive my saying so, Mrs. Herbert, but I can't see how a man like me is to get anything from a *clergyman!* (RACHEL *looks astonished.*) I can see you think me a conceited ass. I'm not speaking for myself only—I mean any of the people who think for themselves. We don't go to books or men in authority; we go to life itself, our own life and other

people's, our own sins, our own experience, our own sensations. Oh, we want to live first, and then to think. We don't start with foregone conclusions.

RACHEL.

You think he—clergymen have not what is called 'knowledge of the world.'

HARRY.

That's about it. Yes.

RACHEL.

We all know enough evil if we look into our own hearts.

HARRY.

I don't mean *that* sort of thing!

RACHEL (*stiffly*).

I don't understand you.

HARRY.

Do you think a man—or a woman, either, for that matter—needs to sit and examine his own heart like a hysterical girl? There's the whole bright world to look at and enjoy. There are things to be done and seen, fountains of inspiration to be drunk from, things to put right, wholesome ideas to sow broadcast, weeds

of superstition to pluck up; and you tell me to keep my eyes fixed on that dirty little hole that they call 'my own heart.'

RACHEL.

You must know what is right before you can 'put things right.'

HARRY.

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty: that is all we know on earth, and all we need to know.'

RACHEL (*shaking her head*).

There's something else.

HARRY.

I haven't told you yet what I had to say. It may sound impertinent, but I'll risk it, because I don't want to be here on false pretences. I didn't come to see your husband: I came to see *you*. You didn't guess it, of course, but I've known you for ever so long by sight. I was watching and waiting for you outside the church just to see you. I never thought of speaking. It was my sister who contrived that, as she contrives everything she thinks will please me, like the brick that she is. I'd told her what you'd come to be to me. I didn't need to hear you speak to know what your voice would be like. I'd seen you

bending down to speak to a child. I'm not going to compare you to an angel. But if—oh, I knew there must be a woman like you somewhere, unsmirched and yet tender, who could understand things without being told, strong and yet gracious and beautiful. I've known lots of strong women, and good ones too —women I've liked, could have loved even, perhaps. It was an awful blow when I found you were married. May I go on?

RACHEL.

Yes, tell me the end.

HARRY.

It seemed to bring you down to something common, like everyone else. And, then—to be married to a *clergyman!* when I'd been keeping you apart in my mind as something unknown and sacred, and yet the most real and solid flesh and blood. I'd consecrated you in my thoughts to the highest things, to the noblest work. Not for my own sake, but yet somehow you were to work side by side with me, even though I should never know you. I was afraid even that chance might bring us too near, that I might know you too well. Can you understand?

RACHEL.

I think I can.

HARRY.

I've offended you.

RACHEL.

I think you were looking for something to worship, because you had given up God.

HARRY (*jarred*).

Ah, that's a false note! I wish I had never seen you. And you let me come, in the vulgar hope of making a convert.

RACHEL (*rising with dignity*).

I shall still hope——

HARRY.

I beg your pardon, I'm awfully rude. Some day perhaps you'll understand the realities that my faith is based on, and then you'll understand what I mean by calling it a 'vulgar' hope. But I'm grateful for that, and for everything, and for the prayers that I know you will pray for me.

RACHEL.

If one prays one must hope.

HARRY.

And if one doesn't hope one does not pray! It's easy enough to do both until some day of crushing

anguish comes and ploughs down to the very roots of your soul.

RACHEL.

I have never known such anguish as that.

HARRY.

If I prayed for anything, I would pray that you never may.

RACHEL.

But I have known—disappointment.

HARRY (*eager*).

You? Disappointed?

(*Enter* DENZILL.)

DENZILL (*to* HARRY).

This is the book I was looking for—'The World Citizen.' I shall be glad to lend it to you. Don't be afraid; it's not theology.

HARRY (*absently, taking book*).

Thanks. (*To* RACHEL) Good-bye, and thank you.

DENZILL.

You're not going? Don't be in such a hurry. I've got ever so much more to say to you.

RACHEL (*taking* HARRY'S *hand, murmurs*).

Stay with him!

HARRY (*to* RACHEL).

I will.

[*Exit* RACHEL.

DENZILL (*throwing himself into arm-chair*).

Now let's have a talk.

HARRY (*rebellious*).

I didn't come to be talked to.

DENZILL (*good-natured*).

No, but, man, I want to *talk*. Don't be afraid! I did all my preaching yesterday. You fellows need not be so suspicious of us parsons. We're not half as fond of preaching as you are.

HARRY (*softened*).

Aren't you? I don't know that I'm fond of preaching.

DENZILL (*nervously fluent*).

Well, I want you to preach if you will. I really should, to tell you the truth, be glad of your judgment as a—as a—man of the world. I've an idea you would look at things with different eyes from—well, not quite from my standpoint, for instance.

HARRY (*dryly*).

I shouldn't wonder.

DENZILL.

Well, anyhow, I should like to know how this story strikes you. A young man—a friend of mine—has asked my advice. Good God! if you only knew how one longs to be advised one's self, instead of *giving giving*—for ever giving one's self away, until one hardly knows whether one has any *self* left.

HARRY.

Yes, I dare say there's something in that.

DENZILL.

This this young fellow—oh, it's a common enough story, except that—he was brought up very strictly and in great ignorance, extraordinary ignorance of possibilities and temptations—never sent to school—lived in the country—was fond of books—didn't even talk to stable-boys, or such people, who might have opened his eyes to things. Then, just as he grew up and was going to college, there was staying in the house where he was a young woman. (DENZILL *from this point in the story continually gets up and walks about in an agitated way, then sits again.*) She was of lower social rank, a sort of servant—housekeeper or something, but good-looking. He—it was a lonely kind of house, with nooks and corners. The other

people were elderly relatives. He began to feel—as growing boys do—not understanding anything. She, looking on, understood—as women do. She always happened to be there—where he was. He couldn't help—Oh, he never guessed anything. He was innocent as a babe. At last (*he puts his hands before his face and groans heavily*)—all in a moment, as it seemed to me, the past was blotted out, and there was present that awful sense of sin and shame. He knew what hell was, has known it ever since. (*A pause.*)

HARRY.

Is that all?

DENZILL.

No! there was a child born.

HARRY.

Ah, yes, it's not an uncommon story.

DENZILL.

I've not told you all yet.

HARRY.

Shall I tell you the rest? The young man became a clergyman—married. His wife was——

DENZILL.

How did you guess? I meant to tell you, but——

HARRY.

You *did* tell me.

DENZILL.

I meant to tell *her*. All this is many years ago. I confessed to the Bishop and all whom it behoved to know; and when I was encouraged to dare to hope for a new life, that I might some day be worthy, I confessed to her father before I spoke to her, and left it to him to tell her.

HARRY.

She was not told.

DENZILL.

Sometimes I could almost fancy not.

HARRY.

I could *swear* to it.

DENZILL.

You understand all this is in strict confidence. I don't know why I told you, except that, like the Ancient Mariner, I must tell my story from time to time. (*He laughs uneasily.*)

HARRY (*standing*).

You may trust me.

DENZILL (*nervously, pushing him to a seat*).

Wait—wait a minute! I want you to advise me. Don't you see? I'm so *afraid!*

HARRY.

What are you afraid of?

DENZILL.

Of—of Rachel partly.

HARRY.

She need never know.

DENZILL.

She must, because—because——

HARRY.

Has the—woman threatened you?

DENZILL (*nods*).

I have done all that need be done—legally. She has no hold on me.

HARRY.

Then I should lie—lie boldly. Clergymen are often harassed by—women of that sort. The only way is to put a bold face on it.

DENZILL.

If I were innocent!

HARRY.

You *are*. No man in his senses holds a boy such as you describe yourself responsible.

DENZILL.

No man of the world! But women, and I a priest.

HARRY.

Would you, a priest, condemn to everlasting perdition a young fellow who came to you with such a story? I wouldn't give much for your God if He would blast a man's whole life here and hereafter for one youthful fault.

DENZILL.

God has forgiven me, I believe. But can *she*?

HARRY.

Try her, and see.

DENZILL.

Sometimes I think that my sad experience gives me whatever little power I may possess for good.

HARRY.

One's own sad experience is the only thing that's ever any use.

DENZILL (*eagerly*).

Yes, isn't it? I have a gift, a sort of fatal gift, of talk. People call me eloquent, I suppose. But this is how it is. When I get into the pulpit, I don't know what I say; I just talk to myself and tell aloud the tortures of my own soul, the terrors of hell, and the horrors of sin. And no one knows that it's myself I'm speaking of. If they did, perhaps they'd hound me from the church. One holds one's self out, strips, yes, flays one's self, and there's the naked soul for all the world to gaze on. One quivers with shame, the prurient have their fill of gazing; and yet—and yet, I tell you, the other souls are *saved*—saved by the sight, just as Godiva's nakedness saved them in the old legend. Who shall condemn me, when it's my sin that saves the others? That's what I keep saying to myself.

HARRY.

You take it too hard. There's no reason——

DENZILL.

Reason! I never could reason; I'm all feeling. I always was! Swayed hither and thither, first by affection and then by vanity, and to-day by fear—fear of two women. What it is to be a man!

HARRY.

Be a man, then, and brave it out. She will understand.

DENZILL.

She might understand *you* if——

(*Enter* RACHEL.)

RACHEL.

I have finished writing out your sermon for you, Denzill. Here it is! (*She lays MS. on the table.*)

DENZILL.

I always preach without notes, and she writes it down the next day. I sometimes suspect she puts in a good deal of her own.

RACHEL.

I'm only a faithful echo; I haven't the power, if I had the will, to be otherwise.

DENZILL.

She's a sort of sympathetic phonograph (*laughing*). Ah, my dear, it's a mercy you can only echo words, not thoughts—'words, words, words.' We have been having a good talk.

RACHEL (*to* HARRY).

You must come again, and you will see he's not quite like all the others.

HARRY.

Oh, I've seen that. Good bye. *Thank* you (*going*).

DENZILL (*going to the door with him*).

Come again, and talk to *her*. Make her see things as you do.

HARRY.

Ah! I must leave that to you. [*Exit.*

DENZILL.

It does one good to talk to a *man!*

RACHEL.

And you liked him?

DENZILL.

He despised me!

RACHEL.

Denzill!

DENZILL.

I despise myself.

RACHEL.

On Monday afternoons! And just because you preached better than usual even yesterday.

DENZILL.

Did I? I don't remember. What did I talk about?

RACHEL.

'Notorious sinners and obscure saints.'

DENZILL.

Ha! 'obscure saints'! That's good!

RACHEL.

Shall I read you what you said? (*He follows her to the table, and looks over her shoulder as she reads*) 'The obscure saint takes his sin, his hateful sin, alone with him into the wilderness. He wears the thought of it ever close to his bosom like a hair shirt. He walks barefoot among the secret thorns his own past has planted, where no one stands by to admire his patience, and even his God is hidden from him by a thick cloud; and yet he walks on and smiles.'

DENZILL (*trying to tear MS.*).

What nonsense!

RACHEL (*preventing him*).

You did not think it nonsense yesterday.

DENZILL.

Yesterday! Years ago.

RACHEL.

You often have these strange fits on Monday afternoons.

DENZILL.

I have a great many worries, dear, that you know nothing about!

RACHEL (*soothing*).

Not real dreadful worries. I sometimes think we haven't enough of those. If we had, we should be able to bear the little ones better. There's only *one* sad thing in our lives, isn't there, Denzill?

DENZILL (*nervously*).

Yes—only one! (*Suddenly*) You mean, don't you, the one that causes my 'fits,' as you call them?

RACHEL.

Oh, that's only tiredness, what almost every clergyman feels.

DENZILL.

Rachel—suppose I——

(*Enter* SERVANT.)

SERVANT.

Lady Deloraine wishes to see you, sir.

DENZILL.

Bring her up! (*Exit* SERVANT.) Another worry!

RACHEL.

Not yours! Think what her husband is!

DENZILL.

Your husband is no better. But (*drawing her towards him*) you love me, Rachel, just a little, don't you?

RACHEL (*with constraint*).

Yes, yes, dear. (*They embrace;* RACHEL *goes out.*)

DENZILL (*solus*).

She doesn't know.

(*Enter* SERVANT *announcing* LADY DELORAINE.)

LADY DELORAINE (*agitated*).

Can you spare a little time for me?

DENZILL.

Certainly, with pleasure. (*They sit.*) Is there anything I can do—anything you wished to say?

LADY DELORAINE.

I wish to say *everything! (A pause.)* Oh, Mr. Herbert, tell me first that you won't *blame* me.

DENZILL (*sympathetic*).

I know a little already of your troubles.

LADY DELORAINE.

I don't know how it is, but you always make me feel, saint as you are, as if you—you knew what it was to be a sinner, like me.

DENZILL.

My dear lady, how could I hope to help you if I had not been troubled myself?

LADY DELORAINE (*breaking out*).

And yet I cannot think anyone has had troubles like *mine.*

DENZILL (*sincere*).

Our own burden is always the heaviest.

LADY DELORAINE.

Mr. Herbert, I'm a *wretched, wicked* woman. I want to tell you all my *wicked, wicked* thoughts! You know, everyone knows, about my wretched marriage; how I

was *sold*, as we girls in society are, in ignorance of *everything*. Now I *know*, and my knowledge has been dearly bought. My husband is bad—bad in every way, faithless, deceitful, mean about money; he doesn't even pretend to love me *now*, and I deserve it. He was ruined, body and soul, before I married him, and I only married for money and position.

DENZILL.

You have indeed a heavy cross!

LADY DELORAINE (*weeping*).

I can bear it no longer.

DENZILL.

Ah!

LADY DELORAINE.

I should have left him long ago if I hadn't been such a coward! Oh, not about the world: I could face the world's opinion. What I couldn't face was poverty. But since your sermon yesterday I feel I could bear *anything*. Oh, how can I thank you enough for those exquisite inspiring words?

DENZILL *pleased*).

You shame me, Lady Deloraine.

LADY DELORAINE (*hesitating*).

I can't get a divorce because—and (*looking down*) he thinks he has something against *me:* some old letters he found, nothing really compromising, but (*viciously*) you know what *that* sort of man suspects. I believe he has me watched. Mr. Herbert, isn't it shameful? It is not right for me, is it, to put up with all that? Oh (*in pretty imploring attitude*), if you knew all, or even half, you would—I'm sure you would—give me your sanction as my priest.

DENZILL.

As your priest, I fear, Lady Deloraine, I could only speak in the words of the Church: 'What God hath joined——'

LADY DELORAINE.

And you dare to say that *God* joined *that* man and me!

DENZILL.

I dare hardly say otherwise.

LADY DELORAINE.

Then you advise me——

DENZILL.

I advise you at least to consider very carefully.

LADY DELORAINE.

I've been considering for months. I believe I could live on very little. I should have to give up society. At least, I couldn't afford to go out *much*.

DENZILL.

It's not only poverty. Poverty, borne with a loved companion, may even be the greatest happiness.

LADY DELORAINE (*excited*).

You have said it—you have said it! I *could* bear anything if—oh, Mr. Herbert, you *must* let me speak out. (*She rushes forward and kneels at his feet, clasping his knees.*) I *could* bear anything with a loved companion. But the companion I love (*hides her face on his knee*) is not for me!

DENZILL (*forgetting himself, lays his hand on her shoulder*).

Poor woman! poor child!

LADY DELORAINE (*seizing and kissing his hand passionately*).

Kind, *kind* man! (*looking up at him*). You—you know—who it is?

DENZILL (*surprised and cold*).

No!

LADY DELORAINE.

You must—you *must* have seen, and known. I thought you did (*holds his hand and looks at him*). Who else could it be but—oh, Mr. Herbert—let me say it this once—I know it's horribly, hideously wicked—but she—I know *your* married life is not as happy as it ought to be. (*He starts.*) Don't you see—can't you believe—it's God's sacred truth, and I'm not ashamed of it. He made us for each other, you and me, and only I have found it out—*yet!* Denzill, my darling, let me kiss you once.

(*She throws her arms round his neck, but he sternly repels her and rises.*)

DENZILL (*with his back to* LADY DELORAINE).

Get up, Lady Deloraine. (*She slowly rises and stands, turning away from him.*) I must apologize for allowing this to go on. I was taken by surprise, and so, I think, were you. We will both agree to *forget*——

LADY DELORAINE (*after a pause*).

I will only ask you to remember *one* thing—that if ever, as might happen, you are in need of anything that I could help in, I will not fail you.

DENZILL (*with his hand on the bell, stiffly*).

Thanks. (*Rings.*)

LADY DELORAINE (*murmuring*).

Cruel man! (*In society tone*) If you like to have your sermons neatly copied out, I should be so glad to do it for you. It would be a real boon to employ my idle hands.

(*Enter* SERVANT.)

DENZILL (*in the same tone*).

Thank you so much. My wife does all my secretary work. (*To* SERVANT) Lady Deloraine's carriage.

LADY DELORAINE (*ironically*).

You are fortunate! Thanks, I walk. Good-bye! such a pleasant chat!

[*Exit* LADY DELORAINE *with* SERVANT.

DENZILL (*solus*).

Silly woman! Ah, my Rachel!

(*Enter* RACHEL. *She stands with her hand on the door, looking stern and statuesque.*)

DENZILL (*gaily going towards her*).

Think of an angel—— Why, my darling, are you ill?

RACHEL (*repelling him*).

Don't touch me, Denzill, *yet.*

DENZILL (*alarmed*).

What is it?

RACHEL.

I want to ask you something.

DENZILL.

Ask——

RACHEL.

I have just seen someone. Her name is Susan—Susan Archer. (*He starts.*) Do you know her?

DENZILL.

Yes.

RACHEL.

I know you will tell me the truth. She was waiting to see you. I thought I could help by seeing her for you. I thought she looked sad, and so I——

(DENZILL *makes a motion as if to speak, but his teeth fall together and he stands rigid.*)

RACHEL.

She has a child. Is it yours?

DENZILL (*ghastly*).

Yes.

(*He stumbles forward to a chair, and hides his face on the table.*)

RACHEL (*coming nearer, sits in the attitude of a nurse by a patient*).

We must talk this out, Denzill, once.

DENZILL (*looking up*).

Did not your father tell——

RACHEL.

Father told me you had spoken of some terrible sin. He thought it was merely an oversensitive conscience.

DENZILL.

Are you sure he did not understand?

RACHEL.

Did you *mean* him to understand?

DENZILL.

How can I tell what I meant so long ago? Yes, yes, I did mean—I know I did—to have nothing to reproach myself for. I meant him, and you, to know what there was against me.

RACHEL.

He *didn't* understand. You must have spoken in your metaphorical way.

DENZILL.

He was soldier, a man of the world. He must have guessed.

RACHEL.

He was a simple, straightforward man. He never *guessed* or suspected anything.

DENZILL.

And if he had—if you had——

RACHEL.

I would not have married you.

DENZILL.

Thank God! Already I begin to feel lighter-hearted. I feared, dreaded this moment, like the coward that I was. Now it is over for ever. There can never be anything more between us, Rachel.

RACHEL (*repellent*).

No—never any more!

DENZILL.

We have one heart, one bosom. Never shall thought of mine be secret from you. Oh, God, what a joy—a spotless conscience!

RACHEL.

I will pray for you, Denzill.

DENZILL.

My own !

RACHEL.

I am not—yours.

DENZILL.

Rachel !

RACHEL.

You chose—the other—first.

DENZILL.

Chose ! My darling, there was no choice about *that !* It was you I *chose,* I loved, but once, this once, and for ever !

RACHEL.

You must have cared for her—once.

DENZILL.

Never ! I was a boy, a child. Can't you understand ? It was only a moment of—a sort of accident. It was all over years before I even knew you.

RACHEL.

It's not over yet. She cares for you still.

DENZILL.

My darling, how can a woman like you understand *that* sort?

RACHEL.

Easier than I understand a man of your sort!

DENZILL.

My sort! What do you mean?

RACHEL.

Once I thought you a hero and a saint.

DENZILL.

And now you know I am a man—like other men—can't you forgive me?

RACHEL.

Could you have forgiven *me*?

DENZILL.

How?

RACHEL.

If I were—had been—like you?

DENZILL.

It's not the same—it's not the same! A man and a woman!

RACHEL (*pointing to sermon paper*).

'He walks barefoot in the secret thorny paths his own past has planted.' Did you mean that only for *women*?

DENZILL.

Words, words! They had no meaning. I meant nothing.

RACHEL.

Has all your life been 'words'? (*recoiling from him*).

DENZILL.

Why do you look at me like that?

RACHEL.

Once I found you posturing before the glass, *practising* the attitude you were to take in the pulpit.

DENZILL.

Well?

RACHEL.

The attitude I used to think so noble and so simple.

DENZILL (*bursts out laughing*).

Rachel! Can't you understand a preacher must be partly an actor?

RACHEL.

Was our Saviour an actor?

DENZILL.

How do I know?

RACHEL.

Is there *nothing* real about you?

DENZILL (*bitterly*).

Nothing! (*Strikes his breast.*) I'm hollow! a mere empty sham! That's all that's real.

RACHEL.

Now I can thank God that *we* have no child.

DENZILL.

Nothing to bind us to each other!

RACHEL.

So there can be no doubt——

DENZILL.

No doubt about what?

RACHEL.

We are not bound; you are nothing to me.

DENZILL.

You mean to give me up? (*in anguish*) to what?

RACHEL.

To your atonement!

DENZILL.

You hate me!

RACHEL.

Can we ever be the same after this?

DENZILL.

There's nothing changed—in *me!*

RACHEL.

But everything—in *me!*

DENZILL.

You hate me!

RACHEL.

I could never make you see what you look like to me!

DENZILL.

You hate me! Ah—don't go—Rachel! Stay with me, comfort me! My God, what could I do without you? (*Tries to hold her.*) I'm so *weak*—there, I've confessed it. It's been that, all along, that ruined me.

RACHEL.

How can *I* make you strong?

DENZILL.

You have! Surely I've done *some* good in the world, and it was all through you—almost.

RACHEL.

Could I help you now with your sermons? help you to act a living lie?

DENZILL.

Why not? I'm good, as good as other men. *Cruel* woman! You'll damn me if you can. For better for worse you promised to stand by me.

RACHEL.

The only thing I can do for you now is to stand aside and leave you to act.

DENZILL.

What do you want me to do?

RACHEL.

Right to those to whom you owe right.

DENZILL.

And if you make a scandal, all the world must know, and must know why. I shall have to give up the Church.

RACHEL.

Lose the world, and gain your own soul.

DENZILL.

I shall starve (*begins to sob*). Oh, it's not fair to punish me like this for that little, little fault.

RACHEL (*kneeling by him*).

Denzill, I would save you the punishment if I could.

DENZILL.

Oh, I deserve it all! I could bear it if you cared for me the least little bit.

RACHEL.

I do care, but this gulf (*rises and retreats from him*) can *never* be filled up again.

[*She goes out of the room before he can speak.*

DENZILL (*recovering, shouts*).

Rachel! Rachel! (*Opens the door and stands listening.*) Gone! (*He shuts the door and goes towards the middle of the room.*)

(*Enter* SERVANT.)

SERVANT.

If you please, sir, the young woman wants to know if she is to wait any longer.

DENZILL (*distracted*).

What young wo—oh, let her come.

(SERVANT *ushers in* SUSAN. DENZILL *goes towards fireplace, and stands with his back to* SUSAN, *while she remains timidly in the middle of the room.*)

SUSAN.

Did you want me—sir?

DENZILL (*turning round fiercely*).

Want you? I want to *kill* you!

(*Advances towards her threateningly.*)

SUSAN (*retreating, screams*).

Oh!

DENZILL (*seizes and shakes her roughly*).

Be quiet, woman! Haven't you injured me enough?

SUSAN (*whimpering*).

I didn't mean to tell her—I didn't. She got it out of me; I believe she guessed.

DENZILL.

Ah! (*More composed*) I had told her already.

SUSAN.

That's a lie, Denzill—I wonder you're not ashamed.

DENZILL.

What does *one* lie more or less matter now?

SUSAN.

She needn't have been so upset. I told her so. There's many ladies would be glad enough if *that* was all they'd got against their husbands.

DENZILL.

What do *you* know about *ladies?*

SUSAN.

I might have been a lady myself if you'd kept what you promised.

DENZILL.

I promised nothing.

SUSAN.

Oh, I don't complain. You've been better to me than many would.

DENZILL.

I've done all I was bound to do. Why do you try to come into my life again? Haven't I suffered enough through you?

SUSAN.

I didn't mean to harm you. I came to see you because I was fond of you.

DENZILL.

Fond?

SUSAN.

I always was. You made me care for you. You have that way.

DENZILL.

That fatal way!

SUSAN.

If you'd married *me,* I wouldn't have turned nasty like she does.

DENZILL.

You seduced me, a poor lad in his teens, and now you talk of—— Pah! Oh that I could strangle you!

(*He seizes her, but she struggles against him and manages to speak.*)

SUSAN.

Well, kill me then—and then you'll be taken up for murder.

DENZILL.

It's you that have killed me—murderess! thief! liar that you are! Rachel! Rachel! save me, deliver me from this woman! (*He flings her away from him.*)

SUSAN.

You'll be sorry for this, Denzill Herbert. Mind, *you* assaulted *me*. *I* never meant any harm.

(*She goes out slowly;* DENZILL *stands staring after her.*)

DENZILL (*with an exceeding bitter cry*).

My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?

CURTAIN.

(*There is an interval of a year between Act II. and Act III.*)

ACT III

SCENE: *The same as Act II., but the study seems less inhabited than before.* RACHEL *is moving aimlessly about. Presently she rings, and* SERVANT *enters.*

RACHEL.

Are there no letters for me, Mary?

SERVANT.

No, ma'am. Shall I bring your lunch in here?

RACHEL.

Not yet; there's someone at the front-door. Bring whoever it is up to me at once.

SERVANT.

Yes, ma'am. [*Exit.*

(RACHEL *stands listening.* SERVANT *returns bringing in* HARRY FIELD.)

HARRY (*coming forward*).

No news?

RACHEL (*anxious*).

None—and you?

HARRY.

I have heard nothing. (*They look at each other.*) How long is it since—three months?

RACHEL.

Six. (*A pause.*) What can we do next?

HARRY (*significantly*).

What do you think?

RACHEL.

I can't think of any plan.

HARRY.

We shall not find him. It is better for you to face the facts.

RACHEL.

I have. And if—it is that, then I have killed him. I couldn't forgive.

HARRY.

You would never have known but for me.

RACHEL.

You?

HARRY.

I advised him to confess to you.

RACHEL.

He—I—found out *that* by an accident.

HARRY.

Then, if he had confessed freely, things might have been different? Don't answer me! I only want you to know that it was I who helped to bring this sorrow upon you.

RACHEL.

Ah! the sorrow is not what you think. I am sorry for him. I wanted to see him again to tell him that. I do forgive—now.

HARRY.

Now?

RACHEL.

Now that I know myself, and understand what he was—is. It wasn't his fault I couldn't forgive. It was himself. I thought him godlike, saintlike, a hero. And then, not all at once, but little by little, the white image of him got covered over, blackened and disfigured, until, of a sudden, it crumbled away, and I was left face to face with nothingness! I tried to

turn my eyes away, to shut out that sight. I was filled with terror. It seemed as if I was turned to stone. And when I should have held out to him a hand of flesh and blood, the terror stiffened me. I spoke cruel words, not mine, but someone else's.

HARRY.

You had ceased to love him?

RACHEL.

It was always my idea of him that I loved.

HARRY.

And if I brought him—if he came back?

RACHEL.

I would try to be glad.

HARRY.

And if not?

RACHEL.

I would try to begin life again differently.

HARRY.

To begin again? Alone? Do you know what you have said? Do you know what you are saying? Rachel! Something that fills me with a wild joy, and

hope, that makes me dare to say what my heart has been saying, my eyes and thoughts, and all but my lips, have been speaking, these many months. You know what it is—Rachel?

RACHEL.

You have only an image in your thought, not the real me!

HARRY.

I had, but not now. It is you I love. Tell me that you might have loved me!

RACHEL.

You once said I hoped to convert you, to make you a Christian. Since that day—*the* day—I have never prayed; I never could pray. All that fell away, too, with my faith in Denzill. The words that came into my mind were his words, his voice and tone in every one, and every word seemed false, like him.

HARRY.

Do I seem false?

RACHEL.

I dare not use the words that he and I once used to each other.

HARRY.

I can wait!

RACHEL.

Now there is something to be done. Perhaps a time will come for speaking. We must find him. I gave him strength—some strength before; I can strengthen him again now, as a mother would, and I have never been a mother.

HARRY.

I have just remembered something.

RACHEL.

Yes?

HARRY.

Yesterday a woman begged of me—for her husband, she said. It was a woman I had seen before, waiting outside the church one day, a dark, handsomish woman——

RACHEL.

Ah!

HARRY.

She said her husband was ill; she said he had been a gentleman once.

RACHEL.

What was her name?

HARRY.

Archer! Was that the——

RACHEL.

That was the name.

HARRY.

She gave me an address. Shall I go?

RACHEL.

Yes, go!

(*He goes out, and she remains standing in the middle of the room.*)

(*Enter by another door* DENZILL. *He is ragged and dishevelled, and looks ill, and as if he had been drinking.*)

RACHEL (*stares at him as if he were a stranger*).

Who——? ah, *Denzill!*

DENZILL (*staggering towards her*).

She doesn't know me! Ha! ha! (*demoniac laugh*). No wonder! no wonder!

(*He staggers to a seat and leans his head on the table, and sobs.*)

Oh my God! oh my God!

RACHEL (*stands looking at him in pity*).

Sh, sh! don't cry, Denzill!

(*She touches his shoulder.*)

DENZILL (*gradually ceases to sob and looks up*).

I—I—can't help it. (*As he recovers, she retreats a little from him.*) Don't—ah, don't—you're not going away?

RACHEL.

No, no! See! I am here.

(*She sits beside him.*)

DENZILL.

Sit in the light—there—where I can see you. (*She moves to the light.*) Oh, my God! what I have lost! what I have lost! (*Rachel weeps.*) Don't cry! what have you to cry about?

RACHEL.

I—I—thought you were dead.

DENZILL.

You wished I was dead! Well—you see me!

RACHEL.

Forgive me, forgive me, Denzill!

DENZILL.

What have *I* to forgive?

RACHEL.

I have made you so unhappy.

DENZILL

You've killed me!

RACHEL.

I was cruel—hard.

DENZILL.

I thought you loved me, you said so, and then you drove me away suddenly, without a word of warning. I was a good man then—almost—and you treated me as if I'd been the greatest villain.

RACHEL.

I didn't understand.

DENZILL.

I couldn't have done so to you. I thought you looked up to me, worshipped me almost.

RACHEL.

I did—once.

DENZILL (*harshly*).

Why did you leave off like that, suddenly? I didn't change; I was just what I always had been till then.

RACHEL.

It was not sudden: I found out, bit by bit, that everything, I myself, was different from what I thought.

DENZILL.

God and Rachel, Rachel and God, had been one name for me, and both, both fell away from me at once. Every word that came from your lips came to me as the voice of God, and now that voice sounds no more. Darkness and silence is round about me! Ah me! ah me! (*with a gesture of despair*).

RACHEL.

Poor, poor Denzill!

DENZILL.

You pity me (*fiercely*), you—you *virtuous* woman! You dare to pity when you wouldn't lift a finger to help me! Don't you want to know how I came to be like this?

RACHEL.

Ah, this! (*touching his ragged sleeve*).

DENZILL.

Don't you want to know?

(*She answers by a gesture, coming nearer to him.*)

Don't touch me! Yes, you may touch me now. I'm not your husband, Denzill Herbert, who swore to love and cherish you, and kept his oath, and would have kept it and had no need to swear, he loved you so. I'm not that man! I'm a fallen creature, a leper; you can touch me now, out of charity: you were always charitable. I used to say you might have posed for the mother of all men, you poor, childless woman!

RACHEL (*taking his hand*).

Let me help you.

DENZILL (*bursting into tears*).

Too late!

RACHEL.

No, no!

DENZILL.

You might have saved me once, and you thrust me away, and so I—when week after week and month after month I implored, entreated, and you turned to

me a face of stone—I must have someone, don't you see, someone who understood me, someone who understood that I was a man like other men. There were plenty of women crazy about me, plenty who'd have taken my side against you; but it was me, the priest, the preacher, they worshipped; they didn't know the other side of me, the side you never knew—the animal—the beast—who wallowed in drink and lust. I was never meant to live always on a pedestal, like a marble statue full in the rays of the sun.

RACHEL.

I know!

DENZILL.

No, *you* don't know. But *she* did. I went to her. We had a fine time together, a fine merry time! Ha! ha! You can't understand that, you—you virtuous woman!

RACHEL.

I have learnt to understand some things better lately.

DENZILL.

So have I! I understand—they tell me—that you have a lover! You, the married woman, who couldn't forgive a poor ignorant boy in his teens! You, my wife, who brought me to this!

RACHEL.

You put me on a pedestal, too!

DENZILL.

Hear her! She does not deny it (*seizes her arm*). Brazen-faced! Run out! proclaim it about the street—ah, your lover! your lover! (*shrieking*). Ah! (*breaks down*). My God! what have I done to deserve this? (*Sobs.*)

RACHEL.

Denzill (*very gently*), try to understand me. Perhaps if I tell you the truth it will be better for us both.

DENZILL.

I don't want you to tell me. I don't want to know the truth. I want to be happy.

RACHEL.

You and I can never be happy again that way.

DENZILL.

We could—we could. Don't you see, Rachel? All this (*gesture to express what has happened*)—all this has never happened. Let us suppose I was

only pretending; I did it to prove you. And let everything be as it used.

RACHEL.

Everything as it used? You can take it like that?

DENZILL (*wildly*).

Why not? I can take anything anyhow, be all things to all men. I can take comedy tragically or tragedy comically. See now, there's nothing to cry about! I laugh! ha! ha! It's a funny world! What I told you just now was a lie! I never went to Susan —I never got drunk—I never——

RACHEL (*earnestly*).

You never—thank God! Denzill, you are telling the truth now?

DENZILL.

'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate. Your truth is not the same as mine.

RACHEL.

Yes, yes, it is. Facts are the same. Feelings are different, perhaps.

DENZILL (*solemnly*).

Then, the truth is, I'm not a beast!

RACHEL.

And you let me believe——

DENZILL.

Oh, you'd believe anything.

RACHEL.

Anything you told me!

DENZILL (*with another change of tone, throwing himself at her feet*).

Then, believe that I cannot live without you, that I love you still, have always. Whatever depths I've sunk to, you could have saved me all along. Come back to me and save me now!

(*He clutches at her dress.*)

RACHEL.

If I only could!

DENZILL.

I see: you've become advanced! an individualist! As selfish as—as a man!

RACHEL.

If we could—if we could forget the past, and begin again, we two, there would still be—what could you do? you could not preach!

DENZILL.

It's all I'm fit for.

RACHEL (*after a pause*).

I could earn—I have earned a little. I could send you money.

DENZILL.

Thanks! (*bitterly*). Send me money, quotha! and I could spend it—on drink!

RACHEL.

You could write——

DENZILL.

And earn a little money, just enough to send it back.

RACHEL.

You often used to say you wished you had time to write.

DENZILL (*peevishly*).

How can I write when I'm always hungry?

RACHEL (*starting up*).

Ah! I ought—I might have given you food.

(*Going.*)

DENZILL.

How you understand me! Hungry? Yes, I'm hungry for food, but don't you see there's another sort of food I'm craving, I'm dying for?

RACHEL.

You mean my affection! you have it still, Denzill.

DENZILL.

No I haven't, not an ounce! You can't deceive me. I know women. You're longing, dying to get rid of me, so that you may talk it over with your—your—that blackguard!

RACHEL.

That's not true!

DENZILL.

Do you think I care whether it's true or not? I've lost you, the you that I cared for, your utter belief in and trust in and care of me. There's nothing left but this cold-blooded woman, who's ready to give me advice and as much as she can spare of her time, and who offers me food as she would a drunken beggar, and that's what I am! (*He sits down weakly and buries*

his head in his arms. RACHEL *gently lays her hand on his shoulder, and then steals from the room.*) (*He looks up*) She's gone to get me food, ha! ha! Oh dear! I'm so tired, and ill. Oh, God, do make me well again, or else let me die! 'To die, to sleep! to sleep, perchance to dream!' (*He takes a little bottle from his pocket.*) Dare I? If only there were someone by just to give me courage! I never could bear to be alone; that's what ruined me. If Rachel would give it me with her own hands, that would be dramatic! Pff! what a beast I am! (*He rises and goes to warm himself at the fire.*) After all, warmth and good food and clothing go a long way to make life bearable. Rachel would not let me want for those! Rachel! Rachel! Rachel! (*He groans, and lays his head on the chimney-piece; as he does so, he catches sight of himself in the glass.*) Who's that monster? Good God! it's I—Denzill—Denzill Herbert! The popular preacher, the handsome young clergyman—ha! ha! (*He stares at himself in the glass.*)

VOICE (*outside*).

Engaged, did you say? Never mind; I can wait. I must see her. Say, please, Lady Deloraine would like to speak to Mrs. Herbert for a few minutes.

(*Enter* LADY DELORAINE. DENZILL *starts back and retreats behind a large chair.* LADY DELORAINE *goes towards the glass. As she looks in the glass, she catches sight of* DENZILL *reflected.*)

LADY DELORAINE (*screams*).

Gracious, who's that? (DENZILL *stops as she turns, and she recognises and greets him in ordinary society tone.*) Mr. Herbert! you caught me looking at myself in the glass. That's too bad!

DENZILL (*genuine*).

A few minutes ago you might have caught *me* looking at myself in the glass.

LADY DELORAINE.

It's kind of you to put it that way.

DENZILL (*grave*).

What *I* saw was hardly worth looking at, was it?

LADY DELORAINE (*impulsive*).

Oh, Mr. Herbert, I am sorry to see you looking so ill!

DENZILL

Thank you, I am ill. I shall be better soon. Won't you sit down? (*They sit.*)

LADY DELORAINE.

Do you know, I really came to inquire about you. I heard you were so knocked up.

DENZILL.

Was that all you heard?

LADY DELORAINE.

I wanted to ask if there was anything I could do (*breaking down with genuine emotion and tears*). Oh, Mr. Herbert, you have suffered terribly, I can see. I can't bear it. It's too—too cruel.

DENZILL (*indifferent, but somewhat soothed by her manner*).

I deserve it all.

LADY DELORAINE.

No, no, indeed! I am sure. My dear friend, you've been overworking—that's all. Do now listen to me; you've so often given me good advice when I needed it. Rest—rest is what you want.

(*She comes nearer to him.*)

DENZILL (*self-pitying*).

Yes, I do want rest.

LADY DELORAINE.

Now, couldn't we—couldn't you go and stay with my brother Ralph for a while? He's got a charming little place down in Hampshire. He's so gay and light-hearted, he would cheer you. And he's so dear: he does anything I ask him. Do, won't you, let me arrange it for you? He'd be too pleased.

DENZILL (*bitter*).

Do you think, Lady Deloraine, I could ever go and stay with decent people again?

LADY DELORAINE (*genuine*).

Mr. Herbert, there have been all sorts of rumours, but I don't ask, I don't want to know—I can only partly guess what has happened, what has brought you to this! (*She puts her hand on his chair.*) All I know is, that what you call decent people ought to be proud to receive you. I should be.

DENZILL.

Proud? To receive a wretch like me, a weak, vicious creature, unable to withstand the smallest temptation?

LADY DELORAINE.

Dear Mr. Herbert, we are all miserable sinners, are we not? I remember, I blush to remember, when you withstood what some people might have thought a temptation.

DENZILL (*with lack-lustre eye*).

When?

LADY DELORAINE.

Must I remind you of my—my foolish infatuation? (*hiding her face*).

DENZILL (*with a dim smile*).

Oh, that!

LADY DELORAINE (*piqued*).

So that Mrs. Herbert has no need—I came to tell her that—to show this terrible jealousy which is goading you to——

DENZILL (*breaking out into a bitter cry*).

My Rachel! Jealous? Would that she were!

LADY DELORAINE (*mystified*).

Then, why——

DENZILL (*solemnly*).

Lady Deloraine, once you promised to serve me if you could.

LADY DELORAINE.

Yes, yes, is there anything?

DENZILL.

Tell Rachel (*gasping*)—tell her I didn't mean—ah no! (*breaking off*). She wouldn't listen to you!

LADY DELORAINE.

Try me; tell me what it is. Let me do something. You have done so much for me.

DENZILL (*brutal*).

Done for you? I made you in love with me.

LADY DELORAINE (*dignified*).

My own folly—which (*malicious*) I have forgotten long ago. I only feel as if I perhaps understand you better than most people.

DENZILL.

No one understands me.

LADY DELORAINE.

I think I do a little. The world is so hard nowadays, upon men especially. You are so at our mercy, you know. And then sometimes (*tentatively*) a mistaken sense of chivalry——

DENZILL.

It wasn't that! It was simply a bestial nature.

LADY DELORAINE.

Oh, what ugly words! But I know what you mean. In some of us, of course, a certain temperament, certain instincts, are so much stronger.

DENZILL (*more responsive*).

Yes, yes, that's it!

LADY DELORAINE (*encouraged*).

And then others, such as Mrs. Herbert, perhaps, scarcely know what it is to——

DENZILL.

No, they don't know, they can't guess!

LADY DELORAINE.

Why, it was just your understanding of that sort of thing that made you able to help others, us weak ones.

DENZILL (*murmuring*).

'Helped others—a castaway myself!' That's what I used to think. I helped you, and how are you the better for me?

LADY DELORAINE.

I am, I am indeed, do believe that. You've influenced me ever so much, and not only me.

DENZILL.

And now, and now, as you see me! Could I help you, influence you, now, in these rags, and all that they mean? Answer me that frankly, Lady Deloraine.

LADY DELORAINE (*beginning to gush*).

Dear Mr. Herbert——

DENZILL.

Remember what you see now is the real man. Before you only knew the priest. Am I the man you would come to now for advice and guidance?

LADY DELORAINE (*impulsive*).

Yes, yes, *I* would.

DENZILL.

Then you love me still! I had that one gift, that one little gift of winning people to idolize and love—

not goodness—not virtue—but me, the preacher of goodness and virtue. I kept myself straight by that; I respected myself because people like you respected me, and through you I kept up appearances and was able to deceive Rachel. Then she found me out, and it was no use pretending any more. I went the way my natural instincts led me, and now I have done things that would make even a woman like you, with a standard like yours, shrink from me, if you knew.

LADY DELORAINE.

But I don't shrink.

DENZILL.

You would if you knew! I think well enough of you to believe that. And this that you see is only the beginning.

LADY DELORAINE.

And you will give it up, and begin again, just as you used to be.

DENZILL.

I can't. If I couldn't stop at the beginning, how can I now? It's too strong for me. Nature—fate—the devil, whatever it is, is dragging me down—down! I shall soon be a mere wreck. I see myself (*he rises*

and looks in the glass)—a sodden drunken bundle of rags and filth, that you'll turn away your eyes from as you pass in the streets.

LADY DELORAINE (*convinced*).

Then end it now! Don't come to that. Let us think of you as noble to the last.

DENZILL.

Ha! *you* advise it? Then, quick, quick, before my courage fails again! You said you would do anything for me I asked. Here. (*He gives her the bottle of poison.*) Pour it out for me, quick—quick! Hold my hand, and say something kind. It's better from you than nobody.

(*As he speaks she obeys his directions, finds a glass, pours out the poison, and hands it to him.*)

LADY DELORAINE (*offering the glass*).

Take it, *dear!* It will not hurt; I love you!

(*He takes and drinks, and falls back dead.*)

Ah! Help! help! Oh, wretch that I am. He can't be dead! he's not dead!

(*She rings the bell violently.*)

(*Enter* HARRY *as from the outside.*)

HARRY (*seeing* LADY DELORAINE'S *back only, as she stoops over* DENZILL).

I think I have found a clue, Mrs. Herbert.

LADY DELORAINE (*turning round, not having heard him*).

A doctor! quick! Oh, sir (*seeing* HARRY), are you a doctor? See—feel—it's not too late! Pray tell me!

(HARRY *moves to* DENZILL, *whom he does not recognise, and examines him.*)

HARRY.

He's cold!

LADY DELORAINE (*weeping hysterically*).

Oh my God! oh my God!

(*Enter* RACHEL *with a tray of food.*)

RACHEL (*putting down tray*).

I've come back, Denzill. Ah! (*seeing* LADY DELORAINE) Lady Deloraine——

(HARRY *starts up on hearing* RACHEL'S *voice, and stands near* LADY DELORAINE, *so that they hide the sight of* DENZILL *from her.*)

LADY DELORAINE (*to* HARRY, *murmuring*).

Tell her! I cannot.

HARRY.

Mrs. Herbert, something very terrible——

RACHEL.

Where is my husband?

(*They make way for her as she presses towards* DENZILL.)

Denzill, wake up! (*She shakes him.*) Ah! he is ill.

HARRY (*standing near her*).

Shall I fetch someone?

RACHEL (*mechanically*).

Yes.

(*She bends over* DENZILL *and discovers that he is dead.* HARRY *meets her eye and sees that she realizes what has happened, without speaking.*)

RACHEL (*to* HARRY).

Ho—how?

HARRY (*to* LADY DELORAINE).

You were present.

LADY DELORAINE.

Mrs. Herbert, I came to tell you you were killing your husband by your cruelty and suspicion, and I found him——

HARRY (*he has found the poison bottle and handed it to* RACHEL).

Like this!

LADY DELORAINE.

No; he asked me to give it him, and I thought it was best. I did it for his sake. But it was you who killed him. (*To* RACHEL) You are a murderess. (*With quiet enjoyment*) I loved him!

RACHEL (*to* HARRY, *motioning her away*).

Help me!

CURTAIN.

BONDAGE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ELIZABETH BELL, *known as Elizabeth Aydon.*
HOPE.
JOAN, *Servant at Bell Farm.*
FREDERICK BELL, *Brother of Elizabeth.*
PASSMORE.
BOB, *Son of Passmore.*
TRAMP.

ALL the acts take place in the hall of a Yorkshire farmhouse, Bell Farm. The walls are panelled with oak. Chimneypiece with log fire, over which hang two pictures with their faces turned to the wall. Other portraits on walls. At the back a wide double door with windows on each side. Furniture plain and scanty: Oak table in centre, oak settle, etc.

BONDAGE

ACT I

Date January 2, 18—? Time 4 p.m. Through the windows at the back are seen snow-covered moors.

(*Enter* JOAN *carrying logs.*)

JOAN.

Eh, but it's cold! I'm fairly starved, and I mun keep thae doors open. Miss Elizabeth has put them to again. (*Puts logs on the fire, and goes to open the door at the back.*) Every second of January, as long as I live, will I make ready to receive—— (*She looks out through the door; flakes of snow fly in; a lantern is seen twinkling in the background.*) Eh! but what's thatten? Can it be—— The Lord forgive me my sins! It's a drowned man!

[*Exit through door at back.*

(*Enter* HOPE *and* BOB PASSMORE, *as if from skating.*)

HOPE.

What a delicious day we've had! I'm as hungry as a hunter.

BOB.

I'm not a bit.

HOPE.

I'm sure you are. You're only pretending!

(*Throws down skates and muff on table.*)

BOB.

I was never more serious in my life.

HOPE.

That's fortunate, because I can't give you anything.

(*Standing by fire.*)

BOB (*coming up to her*).

Are you quite sure about that?

HOPE.

You know I told you Elizabeth says we're so poor we shall have to leave Bell Farm very soon. So I can't ask you to stay to supper, because she doesn't like anyone to see our poverty.

BOB.

What time is supper?

HOPE.

I believe you are hungry.

BOB.

Yes, I am awfully.

HOPE.

You shall have my supper. I don't want any.

BOB (*kissing her*).

You darling!

HOPE.

Do you really mean that?

BOB.

Of course.

HOPE (*between laughter and tears*).

Ah! then I'm not hungry any more!

BOB (*taking her hands*).

We're not either of us hungry, are we?

HOPE.

Not a bit. We never shall be, shall we?

BOB.

Never. Because we—— (*Pauses.*)

HOPE.

Because we——

BOB.

I want to hear you say it.

HOPE.

You must begin.

BOB.

Because I love you, and I believe that you——

HOPE.

That I love you! Yes, I do, Bob; only——

BOB.

Only! There can't be any 'only.' You'll drive me mad if you say that.

(*Takes her hand, places her in an arm-chair by the fire, and sits on a footstool at her feet.*)

HOPE.

Do you know, Bob, I'm so afraid I care for you more than Elizabeth.

BOB.

I should hope so.

HOPE.

But I didn't before to-day.

BOB.

I did.

HOPE.

I found it out just as we were skating round that corner—do you remember?—where the pine-trees are. You pulled me back because you were afraid that we were getting near the thin ice.

BOB (*shuddering*).

And I might have lost you.

HOPE.

No. We should have been together. That was what I thought. I wasn't a bit afraid, because you were there too. Do you see? That was how I found out.

BOB.

How old are you, Hope?

HOPE.

Seventeen, they think. They count my birthday from the day when I was found—when Elizabeth found me.

BOB.

On that doorstep? (*indicating the front of the house*).

HOPE (*nods*).

She has been very good to me.

BOB.

I don't see that. What else could she have done?

HOPE.

Oh, because I didn't belong to her, you see.

BOB.

Didn't you?

HOPE.

I didn't belong to anyone, until——

BOB.

Until you belonged to me.

HOPE.

Do you mind very much, Bob?

BOB.

Your belonging to me? Not exactly.

HOPE.

Oh, because Elizabeth said people would despise me, because nobody knows who I am.

BOB.

I know who you are.

HOPE.

Do you? Who am I?

BOB.

You are my darling little wife.

HOPE.

I sometimes think that is why I don't feel quite as I ought about Elizabeth, because——

BOB.

Because—she hates me, I believe.

HOPE.

I mean, because she is not really my—any relation to me. And yet I ought to be, I am, grateful to her. I ought to love her, oughtn't I?

BOB.

There's only one person you ought to love.

HOPE.

Ah, there's no ought about that. Are you grateful to your father, Bob?

BOB.

I don't know. I never thought about it. Yes, I suppose I'm grateful, when he lets me do as I like.

HOPE (*shivering*).

Oh!

BOB.

What's the matter, my darling?

HOPE.

I'm cold. Someone stepped across my grave, I think.

BOB (*starting up*).

Someone left the door open—on a night like this, too!

(*Goes to shut the door at the back.*)

(*Enter* JOAN, R.)

JOAN.

Eh, Master Bob! Leave thae doors, and for the love of God run and fetch some brandy!

HOPE.

What for?

JOAN.

For a drowned man.

HOPE.

But if he's drowned——

BOB.

What's the good of brandy?

JOAN.

Eh, lad, make haste. He's not drowned, only very near. It's your father!

BOB.

My f—— Good Lord! Why didn't you say so before? Where is he?

JOAN.

On Miss Elizabeth's bed. They brought him in here from the pool.

HOPE.

He fell in?

JOAN.

Through the ice. Now, Master Bob, will you go?

BOB.

Where shall I get it?

JOAN.

At Hales's—they would have some most like; or if not, you must run on to the village.

BOB.

All right.

(*As he goes off at the back he snatches up* HOPE's *muff from the table and waves her a kiss with it.* HOPE *stands as if astonished.* JOAN *turns round in time to see the kiss.*)

JOAN (*severely*).

Are those your light ways, Hope?

HOPE (*coaxing her*).

Don't scold, Joan. Is Mr. Passmore really very ill?

JOAN.

If it hadn't been for Miss Elizabeth he'd have been dead by now.

HOPE.

What did she do?

JOAN.

She's been rubbing him this half-hour. You might have been up helping her.

HOPE.

How could I know?

JOAN.

If you hadn't been giddy-gadding.

HOPE.

Oh, I've just remembered: there's some brandy in the house all the time.

(*Goes towards cupboard in the wall near the fireplace.*)

JOAN (*following her*).

What! in there?

HOPE.

I saw it one day when I was playing at hide-and-seek with the Hales children. (*Pulls at the handle of the door.*) It's stiff.

JOAN.

I'll open it.

HOPE.

And I'll run and tell Bob.

[*Exit at back.*

(JOAN *opens the cupboard door and gets out a brandy-bottle. As she places it on the table, enter* ELIZABETH, R.)

ELIZABETH.

What's that, Joan?

JOAN.

Brandy.

ELIZABETH.

In this house?

JOAN (*shutting the cupboard*).

I've not opened this door for years. I shouldn't have known it was there but for Hope.

ELIZABETH.

Hope?

JOAN.

She noticed it in some of her child's play.

ELIZABETH.

Never mind. Give it me now.

JOAN.

Is he better?

ELIZABETH.

Getting on nicely. (*Takes the bottle, and gives it back with a gesture of disgust.*) No, you take it up; I can't touch it.

(*Sits by the fire as if weary.*)

JOAN.

You'd never do for a nurse; you're tired already.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, I'm tired. Mix it with hot water, Joan, and come soon and tell me how he is.

[*Exit* JOAN, R.

ELIZABETH (*sola*).

He didn't know me when he woke. Am I so changed? (*Holds out her hand, and looks at it against the fire.*) This is my hand—mine. I change?

(*Through the open doors enter a drunken* TRAMP. *He steps into the middle of the room, and reels up to* ELIZABETH.)

TRAMP.

I say, missis!

ELIZABETH (*starting up*).

What do you want?

TRAMP (*in thick, drunken voice*).

Beg pardon, missis; no 'arm, I 'ope? Could you give a pore man something to eat? I ain't 'ad a mite the 'ole day.

ELIZABETH.

You've been drinking!

(*Shrinks back as the* TRAMP *approaches her.*)

TRAMP.

No, missis; don't you say that. If I 'ave 'ad a drop, you wouldn't think no wuss of a pore chap, would yer, what cawn't get no work, nor nothink to eat?

ELIZABETH (*fiercely*).

Out with you! No drunkard shall enter my house.

(*Enter* JOAN, L., *with a lamp, which she puts on the table.* ELIZABETH *stands between the* TRAMP *and* JOAN.)

TRAMP (*insolently*).

Now, don't you try to bully me—don't! I got inside this 'ere house, and I don't intend to get out. I know there's nothing but women here.

JOAN.

Two women are enow for one drunken man.

(*She and* ELIZABETH *push the* TRAMP *out, and lock the door. As they come back into the room, they stand and stare at each other.*)

JOAN.

For a minute I thought it was Mr. Frederick come back.

ELIZABETH.

Sh! (*listening*). Is he gone?

JOAN.

Yes, yes; he's gone (*looking out of the window*). He's walking towards the pool.

ELIZABETH.

The pool?

JOAN.

He won't fall in; he's not drunk enough. Any way, the cold will sober him. (*Hesitating*) It's as cold to-night as it was when——

ELIZABETH.

When?

JOAN.

When you turned *Mr. Frederick* out of doors.

ELIZABETH.

Why do you speak of that?

JOAN.

I *speak* what you *think;* that's all the differ there is between us. (*Coming close to* ELIZABETH) It's the *second of January,* Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH (*turning away from her*).

How is Mr. Passmore? Does he want anything?

JOAN.

Yea; he wants clothes.

ELIZABETH.

He hasn't any clothes? What do you mean?

JOAN.

You wouldn't have him put those on again? They won't be dry for days.

ELIZABETH.

Well, what is to be done? Perhaps Farmer Hales——

JOAN.

He couldn't wear *his* things; he's twice the size. (*Goes towards the door,* L., *and speaks with her back to* ELIZABETH.) There's a suit I've been taking care of that belonged to Mr. Frederick. May he have that?

ELIZABETH.

Take anything you like, and do what you like with it; only don't speak of it to me.

[*Exit* JOAN, L., *with the lamp, muttering to herself.*

(*Enter* HOPE, R. ELIZABETH *has risen, and stands looking out of the window.*)

HOPE.

Elizabeth! (ELIZABETH *turns round.*) I—I couldn't catch Bob.

ELIZABETH.

Bob! (*dreamily*). What Bob?

HOPE (*surprised*).

Bob Passmore!

ELIZABETH.

Ah, the son! What was he doing here?

HOPE (*faltering*).

I—we—he—we were skating.

ELIZABETH (*laughing sardonically*).

You and he? Ha, ha!

(HOPE *stands facing her with eyes cast down.*)

HOPE.

Is—is—Mr. Passmore better?

ELIZABETH (*more kindly*).

What is that to you, child?

HOPE (*distressed*).

Oh, Elizabeth! why are you so strange?

(*Clings to her.*)

ELIZABETH (*caressing her*).

My child—*my* child! Stay with me—talk to me; I feel chilled. (*Draws her to the chair by the fire.* HOPE *sits at her feet and takes her hand.*) Don't give me your hand, child, unless you give your heart with it. (HOPE *withdraws her hand.* ELIZABETH *cries out*) Ah, then you're not my child!

HOPE (*in a low voice, as if to herself*).

You know I'm not.

ELIZABETH.

Not mine by law, but mine in love. Isn't that better?

HOPE.

Yes, yes, I am grateful for your love; you have been very good to me, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH (*stroking her hair*).

But the child does not know what love is when she says 'grateful.'

HOPE (*stands up and turns away, still half to herself*).

I do know.

ELIZABETH (*more cheerfully*).

Never mind. I meant it so. I give you all I have; I ask nothing from you; I leave you free.

HOPE (*turning towards her*).

Thank you.

ELIZABETH (*leaning back and looking at her*).

I have—— You are free, child, are you not? I have been true to that. I have never thwarted, never interfered with you.

HOPE.

No, no, never!

ELIZABETH.

I said to myself, 'She shall go her own way, be herself, the child without father or mother. She shall have no bonds but those she makes herself. She shall owe no man anything, never feel herself shackled by another's life, another's fate.'

HOPE (*kneeling before her*).

And yet I don't feel free.

ELIZABETH.

Not yet?

HOPE.

Just now I want to say something, and I don't feel free to say it.

ELIZABETH.

What prevents you?

HOPE.

You.

ELIZABETH.

I?

HOPE.

Don't you see? I *am* bound to you.

ELIZABETH.

No, no! There! (*pushes her away*). See, now we are strangers. Say what you like.

HOPE.

It will hurt you.

ELIZABETH (*with a forced laugh, striking her breast*).

There's nothing here to hurt.

HOPE.

Then I will. Bob—— You said I might make my own bonds. I want now—— I have promised Bob—I am bound to *him*.

ELIZABETH (*in a constrained tone*).

And to leave me? (HOPE *bows her head.*) You do as you please.

HOPE (*distressed*).

But it does not please *you*.

ELIZABETH (*stands with her back to door,* L., *and raises her voice as* HOPE *retreats from her*).

Only I warn you that if you trust to a Passmore——

(*Enter* PASSMORE, L.)

PASSMORE (*standing by door,* L.).

If you trust to a Passmore you will find him worthy of trust, I hope.

ELIZABETH (*startled*).

Who's that? Ah, Fred! (*unnerved*).

PASSMORE (*coming forward*).

No—Robert!

ELIZABETH.

Rob—Mr. Passmore, I beg your pardon. I only saw your clo—— your figure in the dim light.

PASSMORE.

It's very good of you to lend me these (*indicating clothes*). I know it must have cost you something (*sympathetically*).

ELIZABETH (*coldly*).

Not at all.

PASSMORE (*seeing* HOPE).

Ah! my little Hope.

(*Kisses her.*)

ELIZABETH.

You know her?

PASSMORE.

I understood you permitted it.

ELIZABETH.

Oh, I permit.

PASSMORE.

She and Bob, my son, are great friends.

ELIZABETH.

More than friends, it seems.

PASSMORE (*surprised*).

Is that so? (*Takes* HOPE'S *hand, and looks from her to* ELIZABETH, *as though comparing them. To* ELIZABETH *coldly*) You have been aware of this for long?

ELIZABETH (*haughtily*).

Only to-night.

PASSMORE.

Ah! (*Drops* HOPE'S *hand as if unconsciously.* HOPE *stands for a moment looking at him shyly and appealingly, and then goes out slowly at the back.*) I have to thank you for saving my life.

ELIZABETH.

I could hardly have done otherwise.

PASSMORE.

And I could hardly avoid accepting your services.

ELIZABETH.

Hardly. It was altogether an accident.

PASSMORE.

That we meet again, after all these years.

ELIZABETH.

And that being so, surely no more need be said.

PASSMORE.

Save the courtesies that are due even from strangers.

ELIZABETH.

Those I for one can spare.

PASSMORE.

Because to you alone it is due that we are strangers.

ELIZABETH.

I have no skill to piece together broken threads.

PASSMORE.

Threads which you broke your wilful self so long ago. Who but you should have skill?

ELIZABETH.

'Twas you, not I.

PASSMORE.

Surely you forget, or I must have dreamt.

ELIZABETH (*with biting emphasis*).

I remember perfectly. You said you would never marry a drunkard's sister—a drunkard's daughter!

PASSMORE (*astonished*).

Elizabeth! I—I never said—what chance had I to say—I implored you to see me, to listen to me. You gave me no word, or shadow of reason.

ELIZABETH.

Wasn't your reason enough? I was—am—a drunkard's sister—a drunkard's daughter.

PASSMORE.

How could I guess? I never said it.

ELIZABETH (*dryly*).

You only thought it.

PASSMORE (*reflecting*).

I remember now, I did say—may have said—something of the kind to Fred. I said it to shame him.

ELIZABETH.

He was not ashamed. He took pleasure in repeating it to me.

PASSMORE.

How could you listen to a drunkard?

ELIZABETH (*half jesting*).

Isn't there a proverb about 'truth in cups'? He was sober enough to remember and repeat your very words—I took them as a message from you: 'Go home and tell Elizabeth I will never marry a drunkard's sister.'

PASSMORE (*coming towards her as if for pardon*).

Elizabeth, I tell you I never——

ELIZABETH (*without heeding him*).

There he sat (*pointing to the table*) drinking and taunting me. 'Ha!' he said, 'you'd better come and drink with me, since Passmore won't have you. He's too good for us, for you and me. Here's to the devil with him!' and he tossed off another glass, and another, and another, until he fell on the floor.

PASSMORE.

Dead?

ELIZABETH.

Dead drunk, the *beast!* There he lay! Judge how I loved him—how I felt like a sister towards him; and I had seen my *father* like that. (*Pauses; then in matter-of-fact tone*) You know the rest.

PASSMORE.

He died, or disappeared in some mysterious way.

ELIZABETH.

It was that same day, the second of January.

PASSMORE.

That cold winter.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, it was cold.

PASSMORE.

He was thought to be drowned in the pool, wasn't he?

ELIZABETH.

Marks were found there. If only we had known for certain.

PASSMORE.

That he was dead?

ELIZABETH.

That there might be no more 'drunkards' daughters.'

PASSMORE.

Ah, you understand, Elizabeth, don't you, that a man might hesitate? Not that I did in my heart, as I told you. I only said that to frighten Fred. I thought he was fond of you.

ELIZABETH.

Hesitate—about what?

PASSMORE.

Lest his children should be the *grand*children of a drunkard. It's a man's duty to keep his breed pure, to keep his family free from taint. Don't you believe that?

ELIZABETH.

What do we owe to the morrow? What do we know about the morrow? To-day is all we have. Here am *I*. *Here now.* My desire is for myself; that is all I know. Let the unborn cherish the unborn. The question for me is, Shall I, now alive, at this hour enjoy or suffer?

(*She walks away from him towards the fireplace, and turns the two pictures with their faces towards her. They represent a middle-aged man and a younger man with features resembling, as of father and son.*)

PASSMORE (*comes up behind her and looks over her shoulder*).

They, too, asked that question, each for himself. They thought not of the unborn. You owe your suffering to that.

ELIZABETH (*not heeding him, still looking at the pictures*).

Yes, I am I, not my father or my brother, not a limb or a member—a whole body and soul of my own. And that soul of mine (*turning round to* PASSMORE) met yours. We found each other. I was like a stream that longed to pour myself into the sea. What did it matter that somewhere far away my waters had passed through foul and marshy places? But you closed the full free life against me; you dammed up the current, forced me back into the hateful old limits. And I am become a stagnant pool with green slimy growths of unwholesome weeds and hatreds. I owe my suffering to that.

PASSMORE.

Only to that? Only to me?

ELIZABETH.

Only to you.

PASSMORE.

Then tell me, Who—who was—is the father of Hope?

ELIZABETH (*astonished*).

She is a daughter of the Earth.

PASSMORE.

I only ask the name of *one* of her parents.

ELIZABETH.

I know neither of their names.

PASSMORE (*taking out a portrait-case from his pocket and showing it to her*).

Do you see a resemblance?

ELIZABETH (*trembling and taking portrait*).

Who is this? Yes, it is I, I see. It *is* like her; but was I like that?

PASSMORE (*significantly*).

You are like that. Do you know what is generally said and believed about Hope?

ELIZABETH.

That she is—my child? (PASSMORE *looks at her without speaking.*) And you believed that?

PASSMORE.

I did you the justice to think you had not broken with me without some cause.

ELIZABETH.

There was a cause. I have told you.

PASSMORE.

Secret marriages, I knew, were a habit in your family.

ELIZABETH (*repeats ironically*).

A habit of my family!

PASSMORE.

Then I understood you wished to be called by a new name—Aydon.

ELIZABETH.

My mother's name. I had a right to it.

PASSMORE.

Still, it gave rise to gossip.

ELIZABETH.

To which you gladly listened.

PASSMORE.

To which I shut my ears until every circumstance—your love of me turned to loathing, as it seemed—What could I think? What could I do?

ELIZABETH.

What you did—you could marry.

PASSMORE.

Yes, I married. I would not let my family die out.

ELIZABETH (*repeating ironically*).

The family! And your son—is he without taint?

PASSMORE.

My wife is dead. Spare me your gibes.

ELIZABETH.

As you spared me your suspicions!

PASSMORE.

If only you had told me the truth! You misunderstood me.

ELIZABETH (*shaking her head*).

No.

PASSMORE.

Then it was only Fred who parted us?

ELIZABETH.

He helped me to understand you.

PASSMORE.

I know you too well to——

ELIZABETH (*with a strange look*).

Do you know me?

PASSMORE.

To be able to believe that that alone——

ELIZABETH.

Was enough to make me hate you?

PASSMORE (*looking keenly at her*).

Was it? And not to have forgiven me yet?

ELIZABETH.

Ah, yes. It is over now. We waste time in speaking of it. I forget: I should have offered you food.

PASSMORE (*dryly*).

You have—for reflection. I need nothing. I am going home.

ELIZABETH.

This is the first and the last time I could offer hospitality at Bell Farm.

PASSMORE.

The last? (*startled*). You are leaving?

ELIZABETH.

I have sold it.

PASSMORE.

Oh, why?

ELIZABETH (*moving towards the pictures, which she turns again to the wall, and speaking over her shoulder*).

This is why.

PASSMORE.

You hate the place?

ELIZABETH.

Hate? All my life has been lived here.

PASSMORE.

And your life has been all——

ELIZABETH.

There has been sunshine on the moors sometimes, and the storms did not hurt. Look now at the light on the snow!

(*She moves towards the window, and draws aside the curtain so that moonlight streams into the room.* PASSMORE *follows her.*)

ELIZABETH (*throwing open casement*).

It's hard to leave all that.

PASSMORE.

Is it irrevocable?

ELIZABETH.

I expect the new owner here to-night.

PASSMORE.

Who is it?

ELIZABETH.

An American named Sanders.

(*Enter* JOAN, R.)

JOAN (*agitated*).

Mr.—Sanders has come, Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH (*to* PASSMORE).

That is he. (*To* JOAN) Take him to the parlour. I will come.

[*Exit* JOAN.

PASSMORE.

I knew nothing of all this. If I had only known, I could have——

ELIZABETH.

What could you have done?

PASSMORE.

I might have bought it myself.

ELIZABETH.

Ah! I could not have borne that.

PASSMORE.

Not to turn you out.

ELIZABETH.

Do you think I would have stayed?

PASSMORE (*suddenly*).

Elizabeth, is it too late? Let me see this Mr. Sanders, and beg him to let you off—to put off the purchase for a while until you——

ELIZABETH.

What good could that do? I am ruined already; the purchase-money only pays off the mortgage.

PASSMORE.

Then, let me help you; I have plenty. I could advance——

ELIZABETH.

No, no; I should never be able to pay you back.

PASSMORE.

I don't ask you to pay me back; it would be a pleasure to me to——

ELIZABETH.

To be generous? I know; it is a habit of your family. I thank you, but I cannot accept; besides, it is too late.

PASSMORE.

I owe you something—if you will have it a bargain —for my life saved.

ELIZABETH.

Then, be generous still; let me feel you my debtor, if you count your life of worth.

PASSMORE.

You hate me still, I see. You wish to shame me? You'll accept nothing from me?

ELIZABETH.

Nothing but thanks.

(*Gives him her hand and goes out,* R.)

PASSMORE (*solus*).

Pride—pride! (*mutters*). The only way would be—— No, no; that's all over, as she says.

(*Walks about.*)

(*Enter* JOAN *cautiously with lamp and brandy-bottle, which she places on the table.*)

JOAN.

Is Miss Elizabeth here?

(*Looks round.*)

PASSMORE (*comes forward*).

She's gone to see this Mr. Sanders.

JOAN (*distressed*).

Eh, but I mun warn her.

(*About to pass out,* R.)

PASSMORE.

Too late; she's there already.

JOAN.

And the doors were shut! It's an ill omen! (*Goes towards doors at the back as if to open them, but returns, saying*) Nae good now; they mun bide as they are.

PASSMORE (*stands in front of the stage reflecting*).

Joan!

JOAN.

What's your will?

PASSMORE.

I—I—you've lived here—at Bell Farm a long time, haven't you?

JOAN.

You ken that as well as I, Mr. Passmore.

PASSMORE.

Yes, yes, of course; I remember you in old days. What I meant to say was—— (JOAN *turns away as though to leave the room.*) Stay a moment; I wan you to tell me something.

JOAN.

Well?

PASSMORE.

Were you here when—when Hope was found?

JOAN.

Where else should I have been?

PASSMORE.

Quite so. Then, did you suspect or know anything about her?

JOAN.

You want to know whose child she is?

PASSMORE (*making as if to offer money*).

I want you to tell me all you know or guess about her birth. Who was her father, for instance?

JOAN.

You can keep your money, Mr. Passmore. If I have aught to tell, it would not be gold or silver that could buy it of me, though the Lord knows they're scarce enough.

PASSMORE (*impatiently*).

Well, well, tell me, then, if you've anything to tell.

JOAN.

Dinna be fashed, Mr. Passmore. Why do you want to know?

PASSMORE.

That's my affair.

JOAN.

Your son, young Bob, is courting her.

PASSMORE.

Well, that's why, if you must have it.

JOAN.

And I doubt nae good will come of it.

(*Again turns to go.*)

PASSMORE.

Well, if you won't speak, you won't. I suppose you don't know?

JOAN.

It's no that I couldn't tell, if I'd a mind.

PASSMORE.

What is it, then?

JOAN.

Mr. Passmore, our family has got no good from yours, from the beginning until now; that's the Gospel truth.

PASSMORE (*half laughing*).

You suspicious woman! I can promise you no harm shall come of it, whatever you tell me.

JOAN.

You'll swear to that?

PASSMORE (*solemnly and eagerly*).

I'll swear.

JOAN.

Then, I'll tell you one thing (*comes close up to him, and speaks mysteriously*): Hope's father is in the house just now.

PASSMORE (*starts violently*).

Good God! Then, it's this Sanders!

JOAN.

I didn't say that.

PASSMORE (*his voice trembling*).

And—and her mother?

(*Voices of* HOPE *and* BOB *heard through the open window, 'Ah, there he is!' and a laugh.* HOPE *puts her head through the window merrily.*)

HOPE.

Open the door for us, Joan.

(*Enter* HOPE *and* BOB *from the back.*)

BOB (*goes to* PASSMORE).

Father, I'm glad to see you alive.

(*Shakes hands with him.*)

PASSMORE (*absently*).

Thanks, my boy.

BOB.

And now I want you to come home with me. I've something important to talk to you about.

PASSMORE.

I know.

(*Enter*, R., ELIZABETH *and* FREDERICK BELL. ELIZABETH *looks pale and constrained.* BELL *follows with an air of assumed jauntiness.*)

ELIZABETH (*comes forward and speaks in a cold, firm tone*).

Joan, you can make up a bed for Mr. Frederick in the square room and get him something to eat. I shall sleep at Farmer Hales's to-night.

BELL.

There's no need for that. You can put me up anywhere.

PASSMORE.

Who spoke? Whose voice is that?

BELL (*with an attempt at gaiety*).

For that matter, whose voice is this?

PASSMORE.

It is you, Fred?

BELL (*coming into the light*).

It *is*, Passmore. No wonder we don't know each other. I was just reckoning up with Lizzie. It's more than eighteen years since I was here last.

(PASSMORE *and* BELL *shake hands.*)

PASSMORE (*constrained*).

So you've come; and—and (*looking round*) is Mr. Sanders here?

BELL (*laughing*).

Ha! ha! that's *me!* I gave the name Sanders to put them all off the scent. It was the name I went by in America.

PASSMORE.

You've been in America?

BELL.

Yes. I've got lots of yarns to tell if anybody cares to hear them. But I'm blest if there's one of them as good as this last. Here have Lizzie and I, each under a feigned name, been corresponding with each other, through the lawyers, you know—she as Miss Aydon, I as Mr. Sanders. Of course I thought

Lizzie was married long ago (*looking at* PASSMORE), but it seems she wasn't. I supposed this Miss Aydon was a distant connection on my mother's side who'd somehow got hold of the property. Good, wasn't it?

(*Laughs again, but constrainedly.*)

PASSMORE (*dryly*).

Very amusing.

BELL.

What strange whim possessed Lizzie to change her name, I don't know. A habit of the family, it seems (*looking at* PASSMORE); but I suppose I mustn't ask.

PASSMORE (*still dryly*).

I should think you'd better not.

(BELL *and* PASSMORE *stand together in front of the stage.* ELIZABETH *stands very still at the back;* HOPE *and* BOB *by the fireplace.*)

BELL.

I expected to find her name changed to something else. But there's many a slip—— It seems there was a hitch, eh?

PASSMORE.

It seems so. This is my son.

BELL (*looks at him sharply*).

Ah, you married, then. (*To* BOB, *shaking hands*) You never heard of me, I dare say, did you? Your father didn't approve of me in the old days. He was quite right. He was a better man than I was, or ever shall be.

BOB.

He's a right-down good father—I know that.

BELL (*slapping his shoulder*).

That's right. I like to hear that. I wish I'd a son could say the same of me.

ELIZABETH (*going to* HOPE, *who looks on astonished*).

Put your things together, Hope. You will come with me to the Haleses'.

JOAN.

No, Miss Elizabeth; she mun bide here. This is her rightful place.

ELIZABETH.

What do you mean?

JOAN (*to* PASSMORE).

You were speiring for Hope's father. There he is. (*Points to* BELL. ELIZABETH *cries out.*)

BELL (*delighted*).

Good old Joan! You don't mean to tell me this pretty girl is my daughter?

JOAN.

Eh, but I do.

ELIZABETH.

It's not true! It can't be true! What proof have you?

JOAN (*takes a letter from her bosom*).

This. 'Twas pinned to the lassie's clothes the day I found her. I kept it ever since next to me, lest I should die before I could tell folks the truth. The Lord be thanked I have lived to see this day!

BELL (*takes the letter and reads*).

'This child is the lawful daughter of Frederick Bell. May the Lord have mercy on her!—ANNETTE, lawful wedded wife to Frederick Bell.' Yes, yes! (*emotionally*). This is Annette's writing. Poor Annette! (*kisses the paper*). You remember her (*to* ELIZABETH)—daughter of old Sanders the shoemaker. That's why I took the name. I married her secretly at York, just before I—— Oh, you'll find everything all square. I meant to come back to her, and

then I heard she was dead. I thought the child had died too. (*To* HOPE) My lass, won't you come and speak to your father? He's been a poor father to you, and a bad husband to your poor mother, bless her! but——

ELIZABETH (*comes between as* HOPE *goes shyly towards* BELL).

My poor child! my poor child!

(*Embraces her.*)

BELL (*to* ELIZABETH).

I have to thank you for taking care of her?

ELIZABETH (*bitterly, clasping* HOPE, *with her back to* BELL).

I didn't know whose daughter she was!

JOAN (*to* BELL).

She's been like a mother to her.

ELIZABETH (*to* JOAN, *still clasping* HOPE).

Wicked woman! You knew who she was, and kept it from me!

JOAN.

I did it for the best, to make sure the bairn had a home. You'd have hardened your heart against her if you'd known.

ELIZABETH.

And now it's too late! Ah!

HOPE (*distressed*).

Too late for what? Oh, why do you grieve, Elizabeth? I can never change towards you!

BOB (*to* ELIZABETH).

We shall none of us ever forget what you did for Hope. [*Exit* JOAN.

ELIZABETH.

Boy! who knows what he may forget, or how soon? (HOPE *gently disengages herself from* ELIZABETH.) Yes, go to your father, if you like.

HOPE (*to* BELL, *trembling*).

Father!

BELL (*kisses her*).

My lass, you must try to love me. You've got your mother's face.

PASSMORE (*to* ELIZABETH).

And her aunt's! Forgive me!

(ELIZABETH *answers him by a look; she takes cloak and outdoor things from a peg in the corner and puts them on.* JOAN *enters with provisions.* ELIZABETH *signs to her to take away the brandy-bottle.*)

BELL (*seeing the signal*).

No fear of that, Lizzie; I'm a reformed character —blue ribbon and all that sort of thing.

ELIZABETH.

Here's your supper. Good-night.

BELL.

But you won't leave me like that. You'll stay and have a bit with me. Hang it, Elizabeth! can't you let bygones be bygones? I'm ready enough to repent and do the prodigal brother, goodness knows!

ELIZABETH.

I will never eat in this house again until——

BELL.

Until I'm dead, I suppose you mean. Well, you won't have to wait long, I expect. We're not a long-lived family, and I've used up my constitution one way or another.

PASSMORE (*sternly*).

If that were all you had used up!

BELL (*sneering*).

That's right, Passmore, on the preach again! This is the way the angels rejoice over the repentant

sinner. I was going to ask you to drink a cup of peace with me. But I'm damned if I ever want to see your ugly mug in my house again!

BOB.

Sir!

HOPE (*to* BOB).

Sh—sh!

BELL.

That's it, my little Hope; you'll defend your old father, won't you? Never mind; so long as I have you to care for, I'll snap my fingers at the saints.

(*Puts his arm round her waist.* ELIZABETH *stands at the door as if unable to resolve to go.*)

PASSMORE (*to* BOB).

Come, my boy. (*To* BELL, *stiffly*) I'm sorry to say I was obliged to borrow a suit of your clothes. They shall be sent back to-morrow.

BELL.

Damn it, man! don't bear malice. Come, shake hands. You're welcome to anything I can let you have.

(HOPE *and* BOB *retire to say good-bye to each other.* ELIZABETH, *seeing them, finally opens the door and withdraws.*)

PASSMORE (*coldly*).

Thank you ; good-night.

HOPE (*coming forward*).

Oh, I forgot to say good-night to Elizabeth.

PASSMORE.

She's gone. Come, Bob.

BOB (*to* BELL).

Good-night.

[*Exeunt the two* PASSMORES.

BELL.

Good-night, and good riddance to all such damned hypocrites !

(HOPE *throws herself into a chair sobbing.*)

BELL (*coming to the front*).

So this is the welcome home I've been dreaming of these ten years ! To be shunned like a leper ! (*Seeing* HOPE) There, there, my dear ! they're not worth crying for.

(*Caresses her.*)

JOAN (*she has been looking on stolidly*).

Will you come to supper, Mr. Frederick ?

BELL.

Oh ay, supper! and (*seeing brandy-bottle*) here's what will make me forget!

JOAN.

No, no, Mr. Frederick, no more of that!

BELL (*laughing*).

Quite right, Joan, take it away. Oh, I'm reformed, you'll see. (*Hands her the bottle; goes to* HOPE.) Here's my comfort. Come, lass.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE: *The same, six months later. Doors open at the back with sun streaming in, and summer scenery.*

(*Enter* BELL *from the back, carrying a bouquet of wild flowers and whistling.*)

BELL (*calling*).

Joan! (*Puts flowers on the table. Goes about as if searching for something.*) Joan!

(*Enter* JOAN *slowly, rubbing flour from her hands.*)

JOAN.

Did you call?

BELL.

I want a flower-pot or something to put these in.

JOAN.

There's some in the cupboard on the landing you can take (*going*)

BELL (*laughing to himself*).

I shall have to get it myself, I suppose. (*To* JOAN) Doctor been here to-day?

JOAN.

Ay.

BELL.

Ah! (*agitated*). What did he say?

JOAN.

She may come downstairs. I'm making a pudding for her (*going*).

BELL.

Thank God! Then, we'd better have a fire, hadn't we, Joan?

JOAN.

Not unless you want to roast the lassie.

[*Exit*, R.

BELL (*laughing*).

Ha, ha! Good old Joan!

[*Exit*, L.

(*Enter* ELIZABETH *with cushions, etc.*, R., *and* JOAN *re turning with her.* ELIZABETH *wears nurse's costume.*)

ELIZABETH.

She may sit up for half an hour, the doctor says.

JOAN.

Ay (*arranging cushions on the settle*). Miss Elizabeth, it would be a good deed for you to stay and eat with them to-day.

ELIZABETH.

My work here is done.

JOAN.

Ay, you've done the work; you've pulled her through. All acknowledge that—even Mr. Frederick.

ELIZABETH.

Even!

JOAN.

He's main and fond of her.

ELIZABETH.

Ah!

JOAN.

And she of him. Do you ken that?

ELIZABETH.

Be silent, Joan! (*passionately*). What difference does that make?

JOAN (*dryly*).

Small differ indeed, it seems. Do you never think, Miss Elizabeth, that you might die sudden, with no time to repent?

ELIZABETH.

And wake and find myself in hell-fire? Yes, Joan—often.

JOAN.

And you've no fear in you o' that?

ELIZABETH.

None. I have known hell-fire too long.

JOAN.

I've repented of my part, but it would please me better if I saw you the same.

ELIZABETH (*mocking*).

Never mind, Joan; you've done expiation for us both.

JOAN (*significantly*).

But you're glad in your heart it was not a murder, after all?

ELIZABETH.

Glad! I'm more sorry every day that I live.

JOAN.

Eh, Miss Elizabeth, I'll no bide to hear you say that.

[*Exit*, R.

(*Enter* PASSMORE *from the back, as* ELIZABETH, *seeing flowers on table, takes them up mechanically.*)

PASSMORE.

May I come in?

ELIZABETH.

It's not my house.

PASSMORE

Then I suppose I may. I congratulate you on the recovery of your patient. Is Fred at home?

ELIZABETH.

I don't know.

PASSMORE.

I want to speak to him, but there's something I should like to say to you first.

ELIZABETH.

What is it?

PASSMORE (*a little nervously*).

It's not my business, I know; but I should like to ask you, if I may, why you adopt this—this way of living.

ELIZABETH.

As a nurse? For a very simple reason: it's the only way in my power of earning a living.

PASSMORE.

Some people would say it was fine of you to be independent of your brother; they wouldn't call it fine of him to let you live so.

ELIZABETH.

He has no voice in it; I choose for myself.

PASSMORE.

Then you choose to starve! It's clear you can't earn enough among these poor people to keep body and soul together.

ELIZABETH.

Well?

PASSMORE.

Isn't it possible—I don't wish to preach—to be reconciled to your brother?

ELIZABETH.

It seems to you possible?

PASSMORE.

After all, blood is thicker than water. I allow you have had aggravation; but, so far as I can see, Bell is improved.

ELIZABETH.

And then?

PASSMORE.

All I mean is, can't you accept something from him, enough to keep you decently? I believe he would be willing.

ELIZABETH.

Doubtless, if you asked him!

PASSMORE.

Then may I?

ELIZABETH.

Plead for me? A thousand times no!

PASSMORE.

He owes you something, even if he were a stranger.

ELIZABETH.

No, no! he owes me nothing.

PASSMORE.

Your care of Hope all those years.

ELIZABETH.

Could money pay for that?

PASSMORE.

At least such payment need not touch your pride.

ELIZABETH.

I have no pride.

PASSMORE.

Then, pride would not forbid you to accept help from a friend?

ELIZABETH.

If I had a friend, no.

PASSMORE.

You know you have.

ELIZABETH.

You mean yourself? I mean a friend who should understand me so well that he would know I needed not what you call help.

PASSMORE.

And if such a friend dared only offer what I call help?

ELIZABETH.

He should understand that for the wretched it is as easy to starve as to feast.

PASSMORE.

It is your wretchedness that he would relieve.

ELIZABETH.

It is a burden God has given me to bear.

PASSMORE.

But not to bear alone. Elizabeth, if you have no pride, you will listen to me now. I, too, have been wretched.

ELIZABETH (*softly*).

Have been?

PASSMORE.

In my marriage! I did not look for happiness, only for peace. But I—I suffered deeply, from pettiness, meanness, spite, all that was most galling, for fifteen years, until——

ELIZABETH.

Until?

PASSMORE.

Until the end.

ELIZABETH.

It is over now, your suffering.

PASSMORE.

Now I am free to make *you* happy.

ELIZABETH.

And yourself?

PASSMORE.

I cannot speak as a young man; but you know me well enough to be sure——

ELIZABETH.

To be sure that you know *me* scarcely at all.

PASSMORE.

To be sure that I shall be at least as good as my word.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, I am sure of that.

PASSMORE.

Then, Elizabeth, won't you accept my affection, and give me a right to care for you? There is still, perhaps, something in life left for both of us. There has been much in the past that we must both regret. Let me at least repair my error, so far as may be.

ELIZABETH.

And satisfy your pride? Let me tell you, Robert, I despise it—your pride!

PASSMORE.

You impute a meaning to me wilfully, as you did before. I speak to you sincerely, as I have ever spoken.

ELIZABETH.

And I answer you sincerely. I do not care for your pity.

PASSMORE.

I said affection.

ELIZABETH.

Why not say 'respect'? You think me a good woman, don't you?

PASSMORE.

Of course.

ELIZABETH.

You are mistaken ; I am not good.

PASSMORE.

Your solitary life has made you morbid. You have not broken one of the Ten Commandments (*half jesting*).

ELIZABETH.

And if I had, would you still respect me ?

PASSMORE (*coldly*).

The question is idle. You have not given me your answer yet.

ELIZABETH.

My answer depends upon yours. Tell me, could you still respect me if I had committed murder, for instance ?

PASSMORE.

What nonsense ! I respect you as you are. What more can I say ?

ELIZABETH.

Then my answer is ' No.'

(*Turns her back on him and goes towards window.* PASSMORE *looks after her as though bewildered, and shrugs his shoulders.*)

(*Enter* Bob, *from the back.*)

Bob.

Ah, Miss Aydon—may I—see her?

Elizabeth.

For a very little while.

Bob (*to* Passmore).

Have you seen Mr. Bell?

Passmore.

Not yet.

Bob.

He's out in the long field. I saw him as I passed. Won't you go and——

Passmore.

Go and find him? Yes, if you like.

[*Exit at back.*

Bob (*to* Elizabeth).

Is she—will she ever be quite strong again?

Elizabeth.

She's got over the illness.

Bob (*anxiously*).

But is there anything else?

ELIZABETH.

I don't know.

BOB.

You fear it? Oh, do let me share your anxiety. You know I—you know what I—I am a *man,* Miss Aydon.

ELIZABETH (*gently*).

And she is a woman *now*; she has learnt to suffer.

BOB.

She—the illness was very painful? She suffered very much?

ELIZABETH.

It seemed so.

BOB.

Ah! my father is going to talk to Mr. Bell about—— Miss Aydon, promise me *you* won't oppose——

ELIZABETH.

Oppose what?

BOB.

You know what I—what there is between Hope and me. If only you were on my side!

ELIZABETH (*coldly*).

It's no business of mine.

BOB.

I feel that you are prejudiced against me, and I don't know why.

ELIZABETH.

Not against *you*.

BOB.

Against my father, then. At any rate, there's some feeling of dislike. Mr. Bell dislikes my father.

ELIZABETH (*stiffly*).

I am not Mr. Bell.

BOB.

No, but surely you could influence him; you know me better than he, and if——

ELIZABETH (*laughing*).

Ha, ha! Influence!

BOB.

Even if my father has offended you in some way—I can't help thinking he has—is it fair to visit that on me?

ELIZABETH (*in an altered tone*).

No, no, indeed, it's not fair. But I have no right to move in this, even if I could influence. And I can't; you must fight your own fight, you and Hope, do you see?

BOB.

Oh, I'm willing to fight!

ELIZABETH.

At any rate, you've nothing to fear from me.

(*Gives him her hand.*)

BOB.

Thanks! thanks! (*Presses her hand.*) I can't believe that you couldn't help us now, when you've saved Hope's life, besides everything else.

(*Enter* BELL, R., *carrying vases, as* BOB *speaks, so that he overhears the last words.*)

BELL.

Who has saved Hope's life? Oh (*seeing* ELIZABETH, *speaks with constraint*), Elizabeth! That's quite true; the doctor said so.

BOB (*turning round*).

Good-morning, Mr. Bell! I came hoping to see the invalid.

BELL (*shaking hands*).

You must ask the nurse's leave for that (*looking at* ELIZABETH, *who shrinks away as he comes forward*).

BOB.

Miss Aydon has given me leave.

BELL (*beginning to arrange the flowers*).

Then there's no more to be said.

(*Enter* JOAN, L.)

JOAN.

Miss Elizabeth, Hope is waiting for you.

ELIZABETH.

I will come.

[*Exeunt* JOAN *and* ELIZABETH.

BOB (*nervously*).

Have you seen my father?

BELL (*half sneering*).

Passmore doesn't often come in my way.

BOB.

He's looking for you. Oh (*relieved*), there he is!

(*Enter from the back* PASSMORE.)

PASSMORE.

Are you here, Bell? I was looking for you outside.

BELL.

Oh yes, I'm here; I've not been far from the house lately.

PASSMORE.

I'm glad to hear your—Hope is so much better.

BELL.

Thank you.

PASSMORE (*rather stiffly*).

Can I speak to you a few minutes?

BELL.

As long as you like.

BOB.

Shall I go?

PASSMORE.

You'd better hear what I have to say. (*They sit.*) Perhaps you can guess what I want to speak about?

BELL.

I believe I've an inkling, but go on.

PASSMORE (*in a would-be business-like tone, but with concealed agitation*).

My son—Bob here—wishes to marry your—Hope. Personally, I don't believe a father ought to oppose his son's wishes in matters of this kind.

BELL.

Neither do I. We agree so far.

PASSMORE.

And, personally, I'm fond of Hope myself.

BELL.

We agree there, too.

PASSMORE (*formally*).

If she had been, as I supposed, a foundling, I should still have given my consent. But——

BELL (*impatiently*).

You do us honour. But as she is, I dare say you know now, a little bit of an heiress, it makes it all the better, eh?

PASSMORE (*significantly*).

It makes it different. Oh, not in the way you think. Bob is my only son. I—on the contrary, I have only one condition to make.

BELL (*still impatient*).

Well?

PASSMORE.

That you should alter your will, or, supposing you not to have made one, that you should make a will in favour of your sister.

BELL (*starting up with an expression of surprise*).

Great Scot! (*To* BOB) Your father's a cool hand, young man. If you have a third of his—business capacity we'll say—you're bound to succeed in life.

BOB.

I've no doubt he has good reasons.

BELL (*sneering*).

Oh, his reason's plain enough, for those who have eyes to see. I wonder you play your cards quite so openly, though, Passmore.

PASSMORE (*stiffly*).

I'm not *playing*.

BELL.

Oh dear no! It's always grim earnest with you, isn't it? First virtue, and then an eye to the main chance. Those are your two moves.

PASSMORE (*rises and walks away, evidently restraining anger*).

I hardly see how the main chance, as you call it, comes in here. It's merely a question of seeing justice done to one who——

BELL (*to* BOB).

One who is intended presently for your step-mother. Ha! ha! I see the game!

BOB (*indignantly*).

Then it's more than I do.

BELL.

Ah, you're a young innocent!

PASSMORE (*shrugs his shoulders, still restraining himself*).

As I said, justice demands that Eliz—your sister should be properly provided for. You ruined her.

BELL (*passionately*).

You lie!

PASSMORE (*setting his teeth*).

Allow me to finish. You ruined your sister's happiness first.

BELL (*muttering*).

Did I? That's good!

PASSMORE.

Next, indirectly, as the result of your—your habits, she has been ruined materially. After years of hard work to restore what had been lost through you, she found herself penniless.

BELL.

So that's why you chucked her! I never understood it before. And now when I turn up in the nick of time to offer her a home, she refuses it. What have you to say to that?

PASSMORE.

That you cannot undo what you have done, except in a limited degree, in the way that I propose.

BELL.

By making her my heir, so that, now she's not quite so young as she was, she may still be worth thinking of as a second wife to somebody.

PASSMORE.

Pah!

(*Turns on his heel.*)

BELL.

Look here, Passmore: there are two sides to this. Since you take upon yourself to dictate to me, I think I've a right to ask, as a brother, why are you and my sister not married already, eh?

PASSMORE (*returning, determined to have his say out*).

You left your child to be supported by her aunt. You owe her something for that.

BELL (*shouting*).

Damn your 'owes,' I say! If you come to that, just answer me this: What do *you* owe? (*sneering*). As you keep such a strict account of *my* debts, it's but fair that I should know what stands on the debit side of *your* books.

PASSMORE (*stiffly*).

So far as I'm aware I am clear of debt.

BELL.

You are clear, are you? (*sneering*). Very well, then, some day or other I'll take leave to examine you fully on that point. And take notice (*in a threatening attitude*): until you've given me full satisfaction I deny absolutely your right to dictate to

me what I shall do or shall not do with my money. I'll chuck it all into the ditch and you after it, if I please.

PASSMORE (*coldly*).

As you will. (*To* BOB) Then I'm afraid, my boy, you must give up the thought of Hope for the present.

BELL (*to* BOB).

Your father's a good man, isn't he? If I had as much virtue in my whole body as he has in his little finger, I believe it would choke me.

BOB (*with dignity*).

Understand, sir, that as far as Miss Aydon is concerned my father and I are agreed. We wish to be sure that justice is done to her. As for (*faltering*) Hope, she and I can—wait for each other.

BELL (*sneering*).

Like father, like son. You're a precious pair of calculators. (*Shouting*) I'll tell you what: Fred Bell may be a careless fellow, but he's not such a fool as to beggar his own daughter, so that she may run the chance of being jilted, like her aunt. Your father's taking you in, young man. He won't let you marry

a penniless girl, you may depend on that. He wants to get the whip-hand of the lot of us. I don't blame *you;* but I don't trust you, mind that. There's too much of your father, too much without blemish and without spot about the pair of you.

PASSMORE (*coldly*).

Have you finished?

BELL.

I've only one thing more to say. If you come to me again with your damned conditions, I'll kick you straight out of the house, there!

PASSMORE (*taking up his hat and putting it on significantly*).

Then, I think, Bob, we need stay no longer.

(*Goes towards the door at the back, followed reluctantly by* BOB. *Enter,* R., ELIZABETH *and* JOAN, *conducting* HOPE *between them.* HOPE *looks pale and weak.*)

BELL (*shouting after* PASSMORE, *without seeing* HOPE).

That's right. Get along with you both. I don't mind if I never see either of you again.

ELIZABETH.

Sh—sh!

(*All the men turn round.* BELL *softens at the sight of* HOPE, *who approaches him feebly. He puts his arm round her and places her tenderly on the settle.* BOB *returns as if involuntarily;* HOPE *holds out her left hand to him, while she gives her right to* BELL. PASSMORE *pauses at the door.*)

BELL (*controlling himself with an effort*).

You're only just in time, my lass. I should have knocked Passmore down in another minute.

HOPE (*withdraws from him and turns wholly towards* BOB *with a sad questioning look*).

Ah!

BELL (*eagerly*).

Not now, not now! Here, Passmore, come back. Nothing's worth quarrelling about so long as—— Oh! (*seeing* PASSMORE *half through the door*) come back, man, do you hear? I'll apologize to any extent you like. I can't have my little girl disturbed by such nonsense as this.

(PASSMORE *hesitates; but as* ELIZABETH *goes towards him appealingly, with a glance at* HOPE, *he relents, and touches* BELL'S *hand, which is held out in apology.*)

BELL (*half laughing*).

You always did put up my dander, you know, Passmore. I only want to make sure of my girl's future.

ELIZABETH (*dryly*).

As you made sure of her past.

BELL.

Good God! shall I never be allowed to forget? Never mind. I deserve it. Kick me, every one of you. Yes, I was a skunk, a beastly drunken brute; I——

HOPE (*imploringly*).

No, no!

BELL.

Oh, Elizabeth took care to give me a character, didn't she?

ELIZABETH.

Your name has never been mentioned between us. She never heard you spoken of.

BELL.

I've one thing more to thank you for, then. Well, it's true. (*To* HOPE) I may as well confess it now.

I've been a regular bad lot. Elizabeth would have been a rich woman but for me. I spoiled her life. There (*to* PASSMORE), I acknowledge it.

PASSMORE.

Yes.

BELL (*to* HOPE).

Yes. Passmore thinks, and I dare say he's right, I'm about as big a villain as they make.

HOPE (*soothingly*).

No, no!

ELIZABETH.

Never mind. You disturb the child.

BELL.

I must finish now. She's bound to know me some time. But (*strikes his hand on the table*) I've only one thing more to say. I've done my best, since I came back, to make it up to you. (*To* ELIZABETH) Goodness knows I can't restore the past. But I'm ready to do all I can. I want you to tell Passmore I'm speaking the truth.

ELIZABETH (*to* PASSMORE).

Yes, yes, it's quite true.

BELL (*to* ELIZABETH).

Now you refuse me, you'll take nothing from me, not even a bite or a crust, though I offer you a home and as much money as you want. I offer it as payment of a just debt. I acknowledge that, too, Passmore, but she can't forgive me. She can't forget. Perhaps I deserve that, too, but I——

(*Breaks down and weeps, kneeling by* HOPE'S *side. She caresses him.*)

ELIZABETH (*with a strange look*).

Shall I tell you why?

JOAN.

Yes, tell them.

ELIZABETH (*to* BELL).

When you went away, do you recollect nothing of how it came about?

BELL.

I told you how it was. (*To* PASSMORE) I found myself one cold night, with my leg broken, lying by the side of the pool. How I got there I've no idea —drunk, I suppose. Any way, a fall or something brought me to. But I should have died of cold and

pain, if it hadn't been for a carrier who was passing by and picked me up. He was a real good chap. Took me to a hospital at York; came and talked to me when I was getting better, about my sins. And I made up my mind after that to go off to America and start fresh. I knew I should break out again if I stayed at home. But I had it in my mind all the time to come back when I was reformed. I was bound to cut all the old connections, to get myself free. But I married Annette first, and left her some money in case anything should happen. I tell you I meant to come back to her when it was safe, when I had got quit of the family traditions. (*To* ELIZABETH) You ought to understand that!

ELIZABETH.

Yes.

BELL (*to* PASSMORE).

It's all very well for you, with virtue and temperance bred in your bones, to hold off from sinners like me. But remember this: I was *born* with a craving for drink. Was that my fault?

ELIZABETH (*as if to herself*).

No!

BELL.

I struggled against it, I can tell you. By God! if you knew how I had struggled, how I've kept sober sometimes when I was mad for a drop! You only noticed when I gave way. I tell you, whenever I did, it was not I—it was the fiends that drove me to it. Pah!

HOPE (*turning half towards him*).

Yes!

ELIZABETH (*to* BELL).

And that night, before you found yourself at the pool, you remember nothing?

BELL (*laughing awkwardly*).

I've an idea that Passmore had been at me, preaching or something.

ELIZABETH (*to* PASSMORE).

It was the night I told you of. (*To* BELL) You had been drinking. You said things to me that I couldn't forgive. I was mad with anger and hatred. I could have murdered you, if I hadn't been a coward. But I did what I could to kill you. I—we, Joan and I, dragged you out of the house through those doors

(*pointing to the back*), and bolted them upon you. I (*slowly*) meant you should not come back again.

(*As she speaks the others gradually shrink from her with motions of more or less horror. At the end* HOPE *cries out.*)

HOPE.

Elizabeth!

(*Clings to* BOB, *who supports her, and hides her face.* BELL *has risen, and stands facing* ELIZABETH *in the centre of the stage.*)

JOAN.

The Lord forgive us both! It was a night to kill a giant.

ELIZABETH (*to* BELL).

I cast you out of the house, as I would have cast out a loathsome animal. Oh, I had cast you out of my heart long ago! I (*with emphasis, looking at* PASSMORE) was bound to be quit of the family traditions, too. From thenceforth, and now, and for ever, you are more than a stranger to me; I can accept nothing from you. (*Turns from* BELL, *and takes a position alone in the centre of the stage.*) I choose now, as then, to stand alone.

JOAN (*approaching* BELL).

Forgive me—forgive us, Mr. Frederick! We hunted—set the dogs to scratch for you next morning. The cruel snow had drifted up to the door; we thought you were buried beneath it.

BELL (*looking at* ELIZABETH, *but holding out his hand to* JOAN).

Oh, I forgive you, Joan! It was the best turn you could have done me.

ELIZABETH.

That wasn't what I meant by it.

PASSMORE (*to* ELIZABETH).

You meant murder?

ELIZABETH.

Yes.

HOPE (*coming between* ELIZABETH *and* BELL *as though to reconcile them*).

But now—now, Elizabeth, you forgive him! He's sorry; he wants you to let him love you.

ELIZABETH (*casting her off*).

Now less than ever.

BOB (*following* HOPE).

Oh, why?

ELIZABETH (*turning on him fiercely*).

Because he has robbed me again of the only treasure I had. This—this little child (*indicating* HOPE), who crept into my empty heart, whose baby fingers clung to my breast as though I could have given her milk —I, my soul and body dried up, withered as they were—this child, who made it good for me to be alive again, has been stolen from me; she is not mine, but his.

HOPE (*trying to caress* ELIZABETH).

No, no! yours as well. There is room for both.

BOB.

Yes, do believe that.

ELIZABETH (*repelling them*).

I believe what I know to be true: she doesn't love me. Don't I know the child's heart? Haven't I watched her—looked into her pure, guileless eyes since she was a tiny mite?

HOPE (*turning away, murmurs to* BOB).

It's true.

BELL (*he has been standing staring at* ELIZABETH, *as though stupefied with astonishment and anger*).

So you (*slowly*) meant to murder me?

ELIZABETH.

I have said it.

BELL.

And you've brooded all these years, and haven't forgiven me yet?

ELIZABETH.

You see.

BELL.

You wish me dead still?

ELIZABETH.

That there might be life left in *me*.

BELL (*fiercely, setting his teeth*).

Very well. You hear her? (*To* PASSMORE) That's my *sister*—Lizzie—that I played with as a little boy. We loved each other then, and I never hated her till now. I've thought of her all these years with affection; wanted to see her again; would have done anything for her. (*To* ELIZABETH) So you want to be free of the family traditions? Then, I tell you, you *shan't!* If I can't be your brother in love, I'll

be your brother in hate; I'll show you I can hate as well as you. So there we are—one on each side of the line. I was bad enough, God knows! I've acknowledged that; but you've made me worse. You've destroyed my faith in the goodness of women, or in goodness at all; you've made it impossible for me to repent or to be what I want to be.

ELIZABETH.

As you made it impossible for me to be what I might have been.

BELL.

There it is, then! I call God to witness between us! Which is the worse—the woman who can't forgive, or the man who can't resist his own pleasure? I tell you, every one of you: henceforth I'll have my pleasure; not one of you shall stop me.

(He pushes them all aside, and opens the cupboard by the chimney corner, produces a bottle and glass, fills, and is about to drink, when HOPE *steps between.)*

HOPE *(clinging to* BELL).

Father!

(Seizes the glass as he puts it to his lips.)

BELL (*dashes the glass on the floor*).

No, no, I won't! I'll be a good father if I can't be a good brother. I'll—yes, yes, my darling; never mind. I was always like that; a little kindness and affection could lead me anywhere. (*Caresses* HOPE.) But treat me like a dog, and (*to* ELIZABETH) I'll show my teeth. You—if I see you inside these doors again, it will be the worse for *her!* (*indicating* HOPE). Now then, off with you, or I'll serve you as you served me! By God, I will!

(*Threatens to lay hands on* ELIZABETH, *who stands motionless.*)

HOPE.

No, no!

BELL.

Yes, yes! (*To* ELIZABETH) Why do you stand there glaring at me like that?

ELIZABETH (*to* JOAN).

Take care—the child!

(HOPE *utters a cry and falls back fainting.* BELL *turns to her, and he and* JOAN *and* BOB *support her.*)

BELL (*over his shoulder to* ELIZABETH).

You've killed her! You shall repent of that! My darling! my darling!

(*Sobs over* HOPE.)

JOAN.

'Tis but a swoon.

(JOAN, BELL, *and* BOB *support* HOPE *from the room.*)

ELIZABETH (*looking after them*).

She has borne enough.

(*Going towards the door at the back.*)

PASSMORE (*to* ELIZABETH).

Stay a moment. Elizabeth, I—— Let me speak to you.

ELIZABETH (*only half turning round*).

Ah! what more can be *said?*

PASSMORE.

Very little. Only let me tell you I am sorry for you.

ELIZABETH.

For me—a murderess?

PASSMORE.

Not that! You're not that!

ELIZABETH.

Worse than that—an unrepentant murderess.

PASSMORE.

But one who has confessed, whose remorse——

ELIZABETH.

My hatred spoke, not my remorse. It speaks of itself. I have no choice.

PASSMORE.

No choice, but to tell the truth. I know that in you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, you know now.

PASSMORE.

What I first—what first made me——

ELIZABETH.

You know everything, almost.

PASSMORE.

I *love* truth myself. Let me tell you the truth, as I see it. You and Bell are both victims—you *can't help yourselves.*

ELIZABETH.

Ah! don't tell me that!

PASSMORE.

It's true. That—habit of excess in him takes the form in you of excessive feeling. You accuse yourself too fiercely, and him too much without comprehension. You can't believe that he's anxious to reform—is reformed?

ELIZABETH.

Can you?

PASSMORE.

In any case, he has strong temptations. As he says, it was born with him.

ELIZABETH.

Only with him? His father was also mine.

PASSMORE.

But *that* was not born with you.

ELIZABETH (*turns up her sleeve, and shows a mark of a burnt scar on her arm*).

Do you see that scar? When—when, years ago, all my sorrow began, I once—the longing came upon

me to forget. I was young; memory seemed to me an everlasting burden. I wanted to forget, if only for an hour, all that had been, and all that would be, if I had to go on living. I seemed to see before me the two cups: the cup of misery—I had drained that to its dregs; the cup of joy—that would bring me the rapture, the moment of paradise, the only paradise I was ever likely to taste. If I bought it with an eternity of woe, it was worth it. I determined to pay the cost. Before that I had sometimes tasted. I knew enough to guess what the bliss might be. Now I made up my mind to taste to the end—to make sure. The end had nearly come; a little more and it would have been too late. There was a child's cry—Hope's. I flung away the poison, and there and then I knelt and prayed that God would strike me with instant death if ever again I *so* strove to escape His judgments. And I sealed my prayer with an oath, and branded my flesh so—you see?—lest I should forget.

PASSMORE.

You never did.

ELIZABETH.

I had to struggle—not only once. I took vile drugs to take away the craving. I lay all night on

the hard boards or in the open air. I tortured my body to save my—what? And you see me!

PASSMORE.

I see a brave woman.

ELIZABETH (*laughing scornfully*).

It was worth doing, wasn't it? And now I some times wish it could be undone.

PASSMORE.

And you (*shuddering*) a drunken woman? Thank God you are saved from that!

ELIZABETH.

But I haven't had the pleasure, the happiness. Don't you think Fred enjoys life more than I?

PASSMORE.

He has conquered himself, too.

ELIZABETH.

No.

PASSMORE.

He will.

ELIZABETH.

No, he will not. Hope knows it. It was that brought on her illness.

PASSMORE.

Do you think so?

ELIZABETH.

I know it.

PASSMORE.

Did she tell you?

ELIZABETH.

In her delirium.

PASSMORE.

Poor child!

ELIZABETH.

Yes, poor child!

PASSMORE.

And my son?

ELIZABETH.

Your son would spoil his life by joining it with hers. Can you bear that?

PASSMORE.

Why shouldn't *I* bear something?

ELIZABETH.

And your grandson?

PASSMORE.

Is not born yet.

ELIZABETH.

But if he is?

PASSMORE.

Then I shall tell him of this.

(*Takes her hand, and kisses the mark on her arm.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: *The same, six months later.* HOPE *and* BOB *discovered playing chess. Autumn colouring outside.*

BOB.

Check!

HOPE.

Again! Oh, I can't fight you, Bob.

BOB.

Of course you can't; but you'll win the game, all the same.

HOPE.

How?

BOB.

Because I can't fight you.

HOPE.

Ah! but you must play fair.

BOB.

Very well, I suppose I must. Here goes, then Check!

HOPE.

Oh, how shall I protect my king?

BOB (*laughing*).

By letting go your queen!

HOPE (*considering*).

I see it's the only way. There, then!

(*Moves piece.*)

BOB.

And there! Mate!

HOPE.

Beaten again! So my sacrifice of the queen was in vain.

BOB.

I'd got you into too tight a corner. The game was practically over when you lost your castle.

HOPE.

Yes, one piece is not enough for defence.

(*A noise is heard, as of something heavy falling.*)

HOPE (*startled*).

What's that?

BOB.

Only the wind slamming a door!

HOPE (*rising*).

Are you sure?

BOB.

What else should it be?

HOPE (*goes to the door,* R., *opens it, and listens*).

I thought it sounded like——

BOB (*following her, caressing*).

Why is my darling so frightened?

HOPE (*laying her head on his shoulder*).

Oh, Bob!

BOB.

Your illness has made you nervous.

HOPE.

No, no! it's not that. Bob (*withdrawing herself*), what should you think if I told you—oh, I want to tell you something!

BOB.

All right. Fire away!

(HOPE *goes towards the fireplace. He follows, but she motions him back.*)

HOPE.

Don't, don't come near me! Stay there!

BOB (*stands in the middle of the stage astonished*).

Wh—what's the matter?

HOPE (*holds the chimneypiece for support, turning away from* BOB).

I want to tell you that I—I mean to give—want you to give me back my promise.

BOB.

Give you—what *do* you mean?

HOPE (*turning towards him very sadly*).

That we shouldn't—be engaged any more.

BOB (*seizing her hands*).

What nonsense! To begin with, we've promised, you know, not to count it as an engagement.

HOPE.

Yes, and that makes it all the easier.

BOB.

But you don't imagine, do you, that it doesn't count for *me*?

HOPE.

I know, and I meant it to count for *me*.

BOB.

But now (*his voice trembling*) you don't mean it to count any more

HOPE.

Not any more!

BOB

Hope! Then you don't love me now? Wh—what have I done?

HOPE.

Don't—don't ask me, dear Bob. It must be. I've made up my mind.

BOB.

You don't—don't think me a bad fellow, do you, Hope?

HOPE.

No, no, indeed! It's not you—but——

BOB (*trying to be patient*).

You *must* tell me. Don't you see, I can't possibly believe that you—why, we've known each other all our lives! There's nothing in me different from what

there was six months ago, except that I love you a thousand times more than I did, if that were possible.

HOPE (*starting towards him*).

And I lo—— Then, if you do truly, that is the more reason why you—we must give each other up.

BOB (*laughing, more hopeful*).

Ah, I see: you are only proving me. Did you think there was any need? Well, then, yes, I could even go away from you, I love you so. I could let you go, if I thought it was my duty.

HOPE.

Thank you, thank you, Bob dear. It *is* your duty.

BOB.

I said if *I* thought. But, Hope, my own love, how could I possibly think such an idiotic, monstrous, wicked thing?

HOPE.

Can't you believe me when I tell you?

BOB.

Not unless you take my hand, and look into my eyes and swear that you hate me.

HOPE.

I can't do that, but——

BOB.

Then there are no buts.

HOPE.

There is something that I must do alone.

BOB.

Nothing that we couldn't do better together.

HOPE (*bracing herself*).

Good-bye! (*turning from him*).

BOB.

Do you mean to drive me mad? Do you think I can accept this from you without a word of explanation? Do you know what would happen if I did? I should be left like my father, only worse; for *I* shouldn't marry when I didn't—— Haven't I seen what a wreck he has made of his life? I didn't use to understand it, but now I do; and you think I'm going to bear that? I tell you, I'm not made of the

strong, stern stuff that he is; I should have gone to the bad long ago—do you understand? If you want me to be good for something, you—you—oh, you mustn't forsake me, Hope—sweet, precious—you mustn't.

HOPE.

I must. But you won't go to the bad, Bob; you couldn't.

(*Enter* BELL, R., *drunk.*)

BELL (*singing drunkenly*).

'I care for nobody—no, not I,' etc. (*As he comes forward,* HOPE *and* BOB *retire hand-in-hand,* HOPE *trying to act as a screen between* BELL *and* BOB.) 'I care for nobody' (*singing*). Wha—what's that? (*breaking off*). Lizzie! No; it'sh Ho—— 'I care for——' Ho—Ho'sh my daughter. (*Goes up to* HOPE, *and puts his arm round her.*) Come along and dansh—dansh a bit with me, my lass! (*Seizes her hand, and dances her about in a clumsy, drunken way.* BOB *walks to the window, and stands with his back to them. After a minute* BELL *stops dancing, and lets* HOPE *go. He stands mopping his face in the middle of*

the stage.) Pouf! it's hot; I must go and have a drink. These hot days make a man thirsty.

(*He goes towards the door,* L. HOPE, *from the middle of the stage, starts forward as if to check him, but goes back again, and stands still, sadly looking after him.*)

HOPE (*murmuring*).

No, no—don't!

(BOB *comes slowly forward from the window as* BELLA *goes out, and takes* HOPE's *hands. They look at each other in silence.*)

(JOAN *enters,* R., *carrying a tray with knives, plates, etc.*)

JOAN.

Can you put away your playthings, Hope? I want to lay the dinner.

BOB.

Oh, not just now, Joan; there will be plenty of time afterwards.

JOAN (*grumbling*).

Plenty of time! plenty of time! Eh, Master Bob, it's little time we have in this world, I'm thinking!

(*Places the tray on the centre table.*)

HOPE.

Yes, yes, Joan dear; but one can always find time for meals.

JOAN (*kindly*).

You young folks can live on air.

[*Exit.*

BOB.

I tell you, there's nothing we couldn't do better together.

HOPE.

You don't understand.

BOB.

But you can teach me.

HOPE.

You won't learn.

BOB (*holding her*).

Not if my teacher sends me away.

(*Enter, from the back,* ELIZABETH.)

HOPE (*starting away from* BOB *to greet* ELIZABETH).

Elizabeth, it's good of you to come!

ELIZABETH.

You sent for me! (*Looking round*) Is your—are you alone?

HOPE.

Ye—es. (*To* BOB) I have something to say to Elizabeth.

BOB.

Not about that?

HOPE.

I will tell you everything afterwards.

BOB.

Then, good-bye for the present.

[*Exit slowly at the back.*

ELIZABETH (*looking at* HOPE).

Well?

HOPE.

I wanted to say good-bye to you.

ELIZABETH (*repeating*).

Good-bye?

HOPE.

I—we—I have decided—we are going away from here.

ELIZABETH

We? Who?

HOPE (*turning from her*).

Father and I.

ELIZABETH (*with a bitter laugh*).

Ah! (*Scornfully*) Why?

HOPE (*facing her, half defiant*).

You know.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, I know, too well, what your life is here.

HOPE.

I think we ought to go away—to go back to America.

ELIZABETH (*mocking*).

You think it would be different over there?

HOPE.

There would be a better chance for him.

ELIZABETH.

Then, let him go.

HOPE.

I mean to go too.

ELIZABETH (*seizing her wrist and grasping it fiercely*).

You, you little weak woman! What could you do?

HOPE.

I could fight, and help him to fight against——

ELIZABETH (*in the same tone*).

Against this giant vice, you, you pigmy!

HOPE.

Weaker women than I have done stronger deeds, through the help of God.

ELIZABETH.

God helps those who help themselves. Let *him* try that.

HOPE.

He does try; he struggles, he grieves bitterly the — the next morning. Sometimes for days together he is so—so good and kind and tender.

ELIZABETH.

And then again in his drunken fits he *strikes* you. (HOPE *shakes her head.*) He does; I know it; you can't deny it.

HOPE.

Not me. He doesn't know it's I. He's not himself.

ELIZABETH.

Himself! What self has he but that? A worn-out reprobate—a——

HOPE (*stopping her*).

Sh—sh!

ELIZABETH (*gazing at her in wonder and scorn*).

He strikes you, and you forgive him! Who taught you to do that?

HOPE.

You.

ELIZABETH.

I? I taught you to be free; not to be in bondage to another's life, another's sins, as used to be the lot of women. I meant yours to be different.

HOPE.

But *I* never longed for freedom; I did not wish to stand alone. I longed to be part of another's life.

ELIZABETH (*more softly, with an inward look*).

Yes, I could have taught you that—that larger life of two made one, the perfect halves of a perfect whole, but not this cramping of yourself, to creep into a withered husk to die there.

HOPE.

Yes, you taught me *that*.

ELIZABETH.

How?

HOPE.

It was your harshness that taught me to hate——

ELIZABETH (*with a bitter cry*).

To hate *me!* I knew it! I knew it! I, who loved you dearer than my soul! At last you say the truth.

HOPE (*very gently and sadly*).

I never loved you as I ought, as I wanted to, as you loved me. I used to grieve and wonder why. That is true. But I never hated.

ELIZABETH.

Loved or hated, what does it matter now? It's all over now. Now I hate *you* almost: I despise you.

HOPE.

Because your hardness made me turn to see what pity could do?

ELIZABETH (*mocking*).

And what has pity done?

HOPE.

Here not much, because——

ELIZABETH.

Because you might as well command the rain to fall upon the fields as——

HOPE.

I can water my own garden.

ELIZABETH.

Vanity! Your virtue, if you think it such, cannot make a bad man good.

HOPE.

My love can lift him up to self-respect again, whence your scorn has thrust him down.

ELIZABETH.

Child! It is not for you or me to make or mar in this. You and I are each of us *one*, apart from each other, apart from him. One good, one bad, or mixed of good and bad. You cannot by thinking add one good thought to another man's mind. You've been listening to the lies that preachers tell.

HOPE.

I listen to my own heart.

ELIZABETH.

So did my mother — your grandmother. She suffered and prayed, and hoped that her exceeding love would work a miracle, would turn an evil man from his evil ways. And she died heartbroken, her prayers unheard, her suffering unheeded. I learnt from her to know that who gives a life to save a friend loses two souls instead of one.

HOPE.

And yet you saved *my* life by giving yours.

ELIZABETH.

Nonsense! Your own strength saved you.

HOPE.

And your love! It was my soul that was sick too.

ELIZABETH.

Now your soul is sick with morbid fancies. If I could cure those——

HOPE.

And make me hard like you.

ELIZABETH (*sneering*).

Why don't you try to make me good and soft like you?

HOPE (*caressing*).

You are—sometimes.

ELIZABETH (*softened*).

To those I love, but who don't love me.

HOPE.

Forgive me, Elizabeth: I can't forget quite that you were almost guilty of murder.

ELIZABETH.

Not almost—say quite! I could forget if *you* had been guilty of twenty murders.

HOPE.

And yet you can't forget or forgive *his* fault, so much less.

ELIZABETH.

Strange! But so we are made. I can love or hate. And you—which can you do? You call it love; 'tis only love of goodness. Mine is love of love. I could bear torture for love's sake.

HOPE (*breaking down*).

And I am leaving love for goodness' sake.

ELIZABETH.

Your young boy-lover, yes; you leave him of your own free will.

HOPE.

He will remember.

ELIZABETH (*looking keenly at her*).

And if he remembers only to regret? And when you, who have thrown away your youth, your beauty, bound yourself with your full young life to drag about a corpse—when you repent, and, as the gray hairs begin to show and the long gray years stretch

before you, you desire to taste joy again once before you die, can you bear that? To thirst and thirst like Tantalus, and never—never—to drink?

HOPE.

I have tasted.

ELIZABETH.

All the more will desire come upon you, the stronger and stronger as the years go by. They say desire is quenched by starving. It's one of the lies of the world, or of the preachers. With women, at least, it's not so.

(*Enter* PASSMORE *from the back as she speaks.*)

PASSMORE (*having overheard*).

Nor with men.

ELIZABETH (*turning to* PASSMORE *and giving him her hand*).

Robert, we must save these children. They are all that is left to us.

PASSMORE.

Yes, I am here for that. (*To* HOPE) Bob has told me, and now I want to tell you something. Once

Elizabeth and I were to each other as you and Bob are now. For just this cause that touches you, we were separated. Now we know we should have trusted, held by each other come what might. That was something certain, all that could be known. All the rest is doubt and dimness.

ELIZABETH.

She won't listen to you. She's obstinate.

HOPE.

Only tired of talking (*caressingly to* PASSMORE).

PASSMORE (*with affection*).

Then rest, and leave us two to act for you.

HOPE (*to* ELIZABETH).

I trust you.

ELIZABETH.

You may.

(*Exit* HOPE. ELIZABETH *stands looking after her.*)

PASSMORE.

Will *you* listen to me, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH.

What have you to say?

PASSMORE.

Why need we *say* over again all that we said to each other years ago? We feel alike about this and other things. When I spoke just now, I spoke what you thought. Your heart was open to me. I read it as I used to before——

ELIZABETH.

But did *you* think what you spoke?

PASSMORE.

Else I could not have spoken. I thought the past was dead. 'Twas only that I had shut the door upon it, as one might close a room where a dear friend had died. The room is there, the old furniture, the old light from the windows.

ELIZABETH.

Only furniture—dead memories; the spirit has gone.

PASSMORE.

No; I see it shining in your eyes. Would you be what you are to me if those memories were not living in you yet? Come, let us open the door together.

(*As he approaches her* BELL *enters from behind drunk.*)

BELL (*sings drunkenly*).

I care for nob——! (*Reels against* ELIZABETH.) Who'sh thish? Hope? What, you, Lish? Wha' you do—here?

ELIZABETH (*steps aside with disgust*).

I came to see Hope.

BELL.

He—where'sh He—— Hope'sh my daughter. Hope'sh my daughter, d'ye hear? Hope'sh my daughter.

ELIZABETH (*bitterly*).

Alas that she is!

BELL.

What do you say? Las' night been drinking? No; las' night no' drink. (*Sings*) 'I *care* for nobody.' (*Breaking off*) I care for no man, nor woman either. He! he! (*laughing*). Passmore, ole boy, you come ma' love to Lish? No' f' you; too prou' f' you. You come and drink with me. I tell you abou' nish girl—better f' you than Lish. Where'sh Hope? Hope'sh my daughter.

PASSMORE (*in a low voice to* ELIZABETH).

Better come away and leave him.

BELL.

No, no, Ho'sh no' go' leave me. Ho'sh my daughter; she'sh a nish girl.

PASSMORE (*still low to* ELIZABETH).

Come, come away !

BELL.

No, do' go 'way. (*To* PASSMORE) Shtay and have a drink with me—you goo' fellow, Passmore.

(*As he reels towards* PASSMORE, PASSMORE *retreats and* BELL *loses his footing, stumbles sprawling into a chair, and goes off into a tipsy sleep.*)

PASSMORE (*to* ELIZABETH).

You can do no good here.

ELIZABETH (*coming towards the front of the stage, but looking back on* BELL).

No good, no.

PASSMORE.

Then come, come away ! I ask you again : cannot we—you and I—take up life again where we left it ?

ELIZABETH (*retreating and indicating* BELL).

We left it so—with *that* between us !

PASSMORE.

But now——

ELIZABETH.

Still it remains.

PASSMORE.

No, no; *it* has nothing to do with us. We are what we always were—in ourselves and for each other.

ELIZABETH.

In me, at least, many things are different.

PASSMORE.

Not the eternal things. There remains our—my love.

ELIZABETH.

Is it not your pity?

PASSMORE.

Then pity me.

ELIZABETH (*comes towards him*).

I—a murderess? (*He embraces her.*) Ah, Robert (*yielding*), that this should be left!

PASSMORE (*holding her*).

Shows that it ever will be.

ELIZABETH.

But not the joy; that is at an end.

PASSMORE.

Only beginning—don't fear it. You are so unused, poor girl, poor dear!

ELIZABETH (*thrusting him away*).

There is something else—another bond.

PASSMORE.

No!

ELIZABETH.

Hope. I took her to care for and cherish, not to abandon in her sorest need.

PASSMORE.

We can cherish her together.

ELIZABETH (*turning towards* BELL).

And *she* has taken *him* of her own free will; there was no compulsion.

PASSMORE.

Only a mistaken idea of duty.

ELIZABETH.

Even if it were mistaken. But she loves him! And so I am bound again.

(*Holds out her wrists as though they were fettered.*)

PASSMORE (*seizing her hands*).

Yes, but not to him.

ELIZABETH (*turning from him and looking down on* BELL).

I resisted the fates; I thought I would be free. But it cannot be. The rock may stand against the stream for many a day, but the time comes at last; the foundations are loosened; it is borne along—away—away—there's no escape.

PASSMORE.

Yes, yes, there is. I am here. I can save you.

ELIZABETH (*not heeding him, lays her hand on a knife*).

There's no escape—not even this. (*Takes up knife.*) Even if I—— It would be easy, but it wouldn't be the end; and now (*holding out her other hand to* PASSMORE) I can bear it to the end.

(*Lays down the knife and retreats as* BELL *slowly wakes up and stretches himself.*)

BELL.

Hope! Where's that girl? (*angrily*). Never here when she's wanted!

ELIZABETH.

What do you want with Hope?

BELL.

Mind your own business, and—— What do *you* want in my house? Didn't I tell you you'd better keep out?

ELIZABETH.

Yes, but I thought it best to come in.

BELL.

Damn you, you did!

ELIZABETH.

I refused to stay in the house that sheltered you. But now I think differently. I mean to stay here.

BELL.

And what if it's too late? What if *I* refuse (*shouting*)—refuse to shelter you?

ELIZABETH.

I have a right to be here.

BELL.

You—you damned hypocritical murderess!

ELIZABETH.

Yes, I would have taken your life once. But I gave you back Hope—a life for a life. That makes us quits. I stay to protect Hope.

BELL.

Protect? What the devil do you mean?

ELIZABETH.

To protect her from *you*, as I would have protected my mother, if I could, from your father, when he struck her in his vile passions and broke her heart. I gave you back your child who was mine. Strike her, beat her, break her heart if you like, but kill me first!

BELL (*during her last speech he has been working himself into a fury*).

Ha! So you'll stay and you'll protect, will you? And I may kill you first, may I? I'll kill you, then.

If hate could kill, you'd have been dead before this, you smooth-faced, sour-tongued hussy!

(*He seizes her by the throat. She stands motionless, but as he lifts his hand to strike her face* PASSMORE *interposes.*)

PASSMORE (*pushing* BELL *aside*).

Hold off! or reckon first with me!

BELL.

You! You're another *protector!* You damned humbug! You *protected* Lizzie, ruined her, seduced her, and then——

PASSMORE (*striking his mouth*).

Liar!

BELL (*seizing a knife from the table*).

I'll kill Lizzie first; get out of my way!

(*He aims a blow at* PASSMORE, *who tries to seize the knife from him; they struggle for a minute,* BELL *uttering imprecations. At last he throws* PASSMORE *down and stabs him.*)

Take that, then, and have done with your damned interference!

ELIZABETH (*throwing herself upon* PASSMORE *as he sinks back wounded*).

Ah, Robert, for me !

(*Crouches down by him, moaning.*)

PASSMORE (*faintly to* ELIZABETH).

Tell him it's—not true.

ELIZABETH.

What if it were, my love, my own ? What if it were ? There, so—is it easier now ? Don't speak ! you'll lose more blood. (*She binds him with her handkerchief.*) There, I can bear it, if you'll only smile at me. Ah no ! you needn't smile ; it will hurt you. (*Sits with his head in her lap.*) Forgive me, forgive me, love, my harshness ; I never meant it to you, to you. I loved you all the time, all the time, Robert (*crooning*). Say you knew it, just this once ; it won't hurt you to say that one little word.

(*She kisses him ; he makes motions as though trying to speak, but gradually droops and dies.* BELL *has thrown away the knife, and stands looking on stupefied. At last he rouses himself and pulls the bell-rope.*)

(*Enter,* R., HOPE *and* JOAN.)

HOPE (*going up to* BELL, *without seeing* PASSMORE).
Did you want me, father?

(BELL *turns from her, shuddering.*)

HOPE (*seeing* PASSMORE, *cries out*).
Ah!

(*Enter, from the back,* BOB; *hearing* HOPE'S *cry, he comes up behind her.*)

BOB.

What is it? What's the matter? (*Seeing* PASSMORE, *kneels by him.*) Father!

JOAN (*takes off her apron and throws it to* ELIZABETH.)

There, Miss Elizabeth, stanch the blood with that! I can run for the doctor.

ELIZABETH (*looks up with dazed eyes*).
Too late!

BELL (*cries out*).

No, no, not too late! Run, run, Joan! (*Kneels by* PASSMORE, *facing the audience, as* BOB *kneels with*

his back to the audience.) Passmore, old fellow, forgive me. (*Sobbing*) I—I—didn't—didn't know. Is he —is he—quite—quite——

ELIZABETH (*motioning him away, repeats mechanically*).

Quite!

BOB (*still fondling* PASSMORE'S *hand, in a hoarse whisper to* ELIZABETH).

How?

HOPE (*coming forward*).

An accident!

ELIZABETH (*repeating as before*).

An accident!

BELL (*repelling* HOPE, *who tries to raise him up*).

Forgive me, forgive me, Lizzie; I didn't know. It wasn't I—it was the fiend that possesses me. I never meant to kill——

ELIZABETH (*repeating as before*).

Kill!

BOB.

You killed him?

(BELL, *getting up and taking the knife, which has dropped on the floor, offers it to* BOB.)

BOB.

So? Oh, my God! (*sobs*).

BELL (*to* HOPE, *handing the knife*).

He may take it from you.

HOPE (*mechanically*).

What for?

(*She gives the knife to* BOB, *who takes it unconsciously as he looks up and sees* BELL *point to his own breast.*)

BELL.

For this!

BOB (*dropping knife*).

Will *that* bring back—— Oh, father!

(*Kneels again by* PASSMORE, *to whom* ELIZABETH *is still murmuring endearing words, as though oblivious of the rest.* JOAN, *who has gone out, returns with sheet, etc., with which she covers* PASSMORE, *while* BOB *again rises and turns away,* ELIZABETH *remaining on the floor.* HOPE *murmurs to* JOAN, *who goes out, then approaches* BOB.)

HOPE.

It was an accident!

BOB (*looking at her, hardly knowing what he says*).

Yes!

HOPE (*turns away from him, then returns and stands at a little distance*).

Good-bye!

(BOB *seizes her hand, and tries to speak, but cannot, so they stand looking at each other.*)

(*Enter,* JOAN R., *with travelling-bag, cloaks, etc.*)

JOAN (*goes up to* BELL *with travelling-coat*).

You'll need this, Mr. Frederick.

HOPE (*draving away her hand from* BOB, *goes back towards* BELL).

Good-bye (*to* BOB).

(ELIZABETH *lays down* PASSMORE'S *head, which she has been holding all this while, and kisses his forehead.*)

ELIZABETH.

Good-bye, Robert—good-bye! God meant us to be happy, but we missed our way, and now we shall never find it again. We must each go out into the dark and cold alone; we cannot even hear each other speak.

(*Puts her ear to his breast as she lays him down, and, rising, goes towards* BELL.)

HOPE (*to* BELL).

Are you ready? Then come.

BELL.

Where?

HOPE.

To America with me.

ELIZABETH (*to* HOPE, *pushing her gently aside*).

No, not with you. His life is over. There is yours (*indicating* BOB).

BELL.

Yes, it's all over. I meant to be good (*moaning*). My God! I did mean to be good! And this is the end. Would to God I had died—Elizabeth had killed me—and then I had not sinned.

HOPE.

God can forgive sin. Only repent.

BELL.

Repent! I have repented over and over again, and over and over again have I sinned. There's no more room for repentance.

ELIZABETH.

No more room! (*repeating as before*).

BELL.

All my life there has been something against me, pushing me where I didn't want to go, dragging me away as if I was chained.

ELIZABETH.

Chained! (*repeating*). We are victims both. He said so.

HOPE.

Lean on me; your chains will seem lighter.

BELL.

You, my little Hope? You loved me; you would have saved me if anyone could.

ELIZABETH.

No one can ; no one is free (*to herself*).

HOPE (*to* BELL).

Let me try again.

(BELL *shakes his head, and turning from* HOPE *faces* ELIZABETH, *who has been standing at a little distance, as if still half in a dream.*)

BELL.

Lizzie, Lizzie, I thought it was the truth—indeed I did!

ELIZABETH (*wondering*).

What was the truth?

BELL (*he holds one hand of* HOPE, *keeping her behind him*).

What I said about him (*indicating* PASSMORE) and—and you.

ELIZABETH.

You said——

BELL.

And our family has never been guilty of—that!

ELIZABETH.

Our family!

BELL.

How else could I account for it all?

ELIZABETH (*steadily*).

What you said was not the truth.

BELL.

I know—I know it now. I believe him and you. You were always truthful, both of you. I insulted you. Forgive me, forgive me, Lizzie!

ELIZABETH.

What is 'forgive'? I don't know what it means. (BELL *stares at her.*) You and I have never spoken the same language; we never thought the same thoughts.

BELL (*humbly*).

Your thoughts were the best. Tell me, now, what must I do?

(HOPE *has stolen away from them, and kneels by the side of* PASSMORE *in the attitude of prayer.* BOB *presently kneels beside her.*)

ELIZABETH.

There's only one thing left.

BELL.

Yes?

ELIZABETH.

You must go away for ever. (BELL *bows his head in submission.*) I will go with you, brother. (*She gives him her hand.*) Let us leave them (*indicating* HOPE *and* BOB) free.

BELL (*sobbing*).

Oh, Lizzie, if you'd only spoken so to me before!

(*A gust of wind blows open the doors at the back of the stage, and whirls in a heap of dead leaves, through which they pass out.* JOAN *has been looking on from the fireplace, where she has been standing. She now moves as if to follow* ELIZABETH *and* BELL, *but turns again.*)

JOAN.

Together at last! The Lord has taken vengeance for our sin.

CURTAIN.

GUILDFORD:
BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

All net Prices.

TWO STAGE PLAYS

DENZILL HERBERT'S ATONEMENT: BONDAGE

by

LUCY SNOWE

Royal 16*mo. Three shillings net.*

FORTHCOMING

OTHER VOLUMES
BY LUCY SNOWE

THE PAYING GUEST
a Comedy.

SUBURBIA
Stories.
Etc., etc.

READY

[*Transferred to R. Brimley Johnson.*]

LAMBKIN'S REMAINS

by

H. B.

Author of *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, *The Modern Traveller*, *More Beasts for Worse Children*, etc.

Two shillings net.

'Highly diverting.'—*Morning Post.*

'Delightful fooling.'—*Academy.*

'A feast of humour.'—*Review of the Week.*

'An irresistible study in mediocrity.'—*Black and White.*

'A humorous creation of the first rank . . . Amazingly clever.'—*The Star.*

IMMEDIATELY

LIBERALISM AND THE EMPIRE

IMPERIALISM AND FINANCE
by F. W. HIRST

THE EXPLOITATION OF INFERIOR RACES IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES
by GILBERT MURRAY

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN POLICY
by J. L. HAMMOND

Crown 8vo. Three shillings and sixpence net.

LIBERALISM AND THE EMPIRE

From the Preface.

The writers of these three essays are not 'Little Englanders,' nor are they for 'peace at any price.' They are alive to the need of adequate defences. They are blind neither to the glories nor yet to the responsibilities of the British Empire.

But they believe that for many years past the aggressive and vainglorious instincts of Great Britain have been unduly stimulated; that adventure, conquest, mastery, and race-pride, strangely wedded with speculative finance, and culminating in the fatal lust of Empire, have been so long held up to the worship of the populace by men whose position and antecedents should have rendered them capable of higher, or at least of saner, ideals, that the reason of the country is in abeyance and its imagination intoxicated, and possibilities are brought near to us which may involve in vital danger even a commonwealth so massively stable as our own. In this belief they have ventured to raise their voices.

8, York Buildings, Adelphi,
London, W.C.

PUBLISHED BY G. DUCKWORTH AND CO.,
3, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

MODERN PLAYS

edited by

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON AND N. ERICHSEN

It is the aim of this series to represent, as widely as possible, the activity of the modern drama—not confined to stage performance — in England and throughout the Continent of Europe. It so happens that, though translations seem to be more in demand every day, the greater number of the Continental dramatists are at present little known in this country. Among them will be found predecessors and followers of Ibsen or Maeterlinck; as well as others who reflect more independently the genius of their own country.

Love's Comedy, which marks a transition from the early romantic plays of Ibsen to his later social plays, is the only important work of his which has not hitherto been translated into English. The name of Strindberg, whose position in Sweden may be compared with that of Ibsen in Norway, will be almost new to the English public. Villiers' *La Révolte* is a

striking forecast of *The Doll's House.* Verhaeren is already known here as one of the foremost of Belgian writers, who, like Maeterlinck, uses the French tongue; and Brieux is among the most attractive of the younger native French dramatists. Ostrovsky's *The Storm* is generally recognised as *the* characteristic Russian drama. *The Convert,* by Stepniak, will be specially interesting as its author's only dramatic attempt.

The work of translation has been entrusted to English writers specially conversant with the literatures represented, who, in many cases, are already associated in the public mind with the authors they are here interpreting. Every play will be translated *in extenso,* and, if in verse, as nearly as possible in the original metres. The volumes contain brief introductions, bibliographical and explanatory rather than critical, and such annotations as may be necessary. They are printed in small quarto, and cost, as a rule, 3s. 6d. net each.

NOW READY

HENRIK IBSEN

'Love's Comedy.'—Professor C. H. HERFORD

EMILE VERHAEREN

'The Dawn.'—ARTHUR SYMONS

AUGUST STRINDBERG

'The Father.'—N. ERICHSEN

OSTROVSKY

'The Storm.'—CONSTANCE GARNETT

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

'Intérieur.'—WILLIAM ARCHER
'La Mort de Tintagiles.' }
'Alladine et Palomides.' } —ALFRED SUTRO

GERHART HAUPTMANN

'The Coming of Peace.'—JANET ACHURCH and C. E. WHEELER

VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

'La Révolte.' }
'L'Evasion.' } THERESA BARCLAY

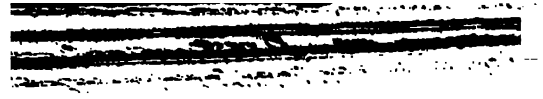
SERGIUS STEPNIAK

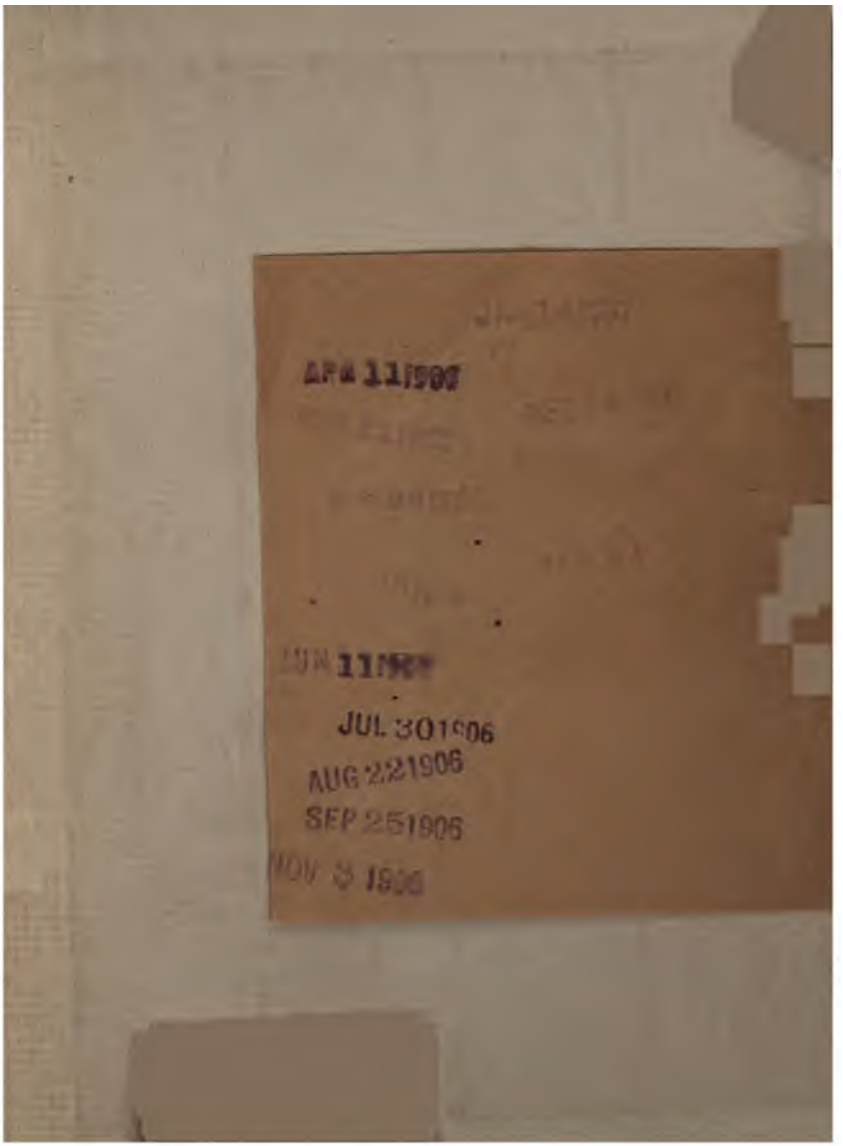
'The Convert.'—CONSTANCE GARNETT

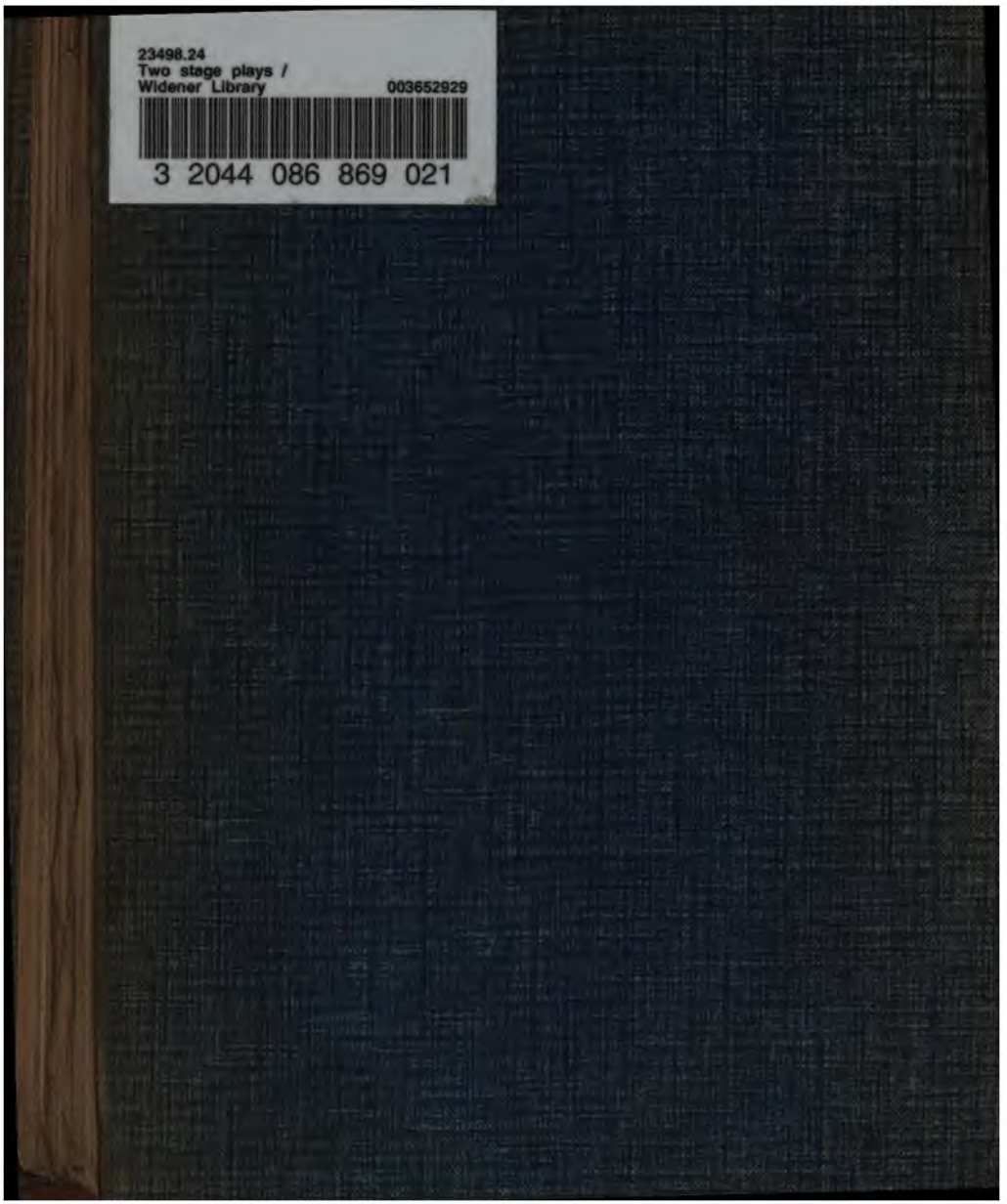
BRIEUX

'Les Bienfaiteurs.'—LUCAS MALET

Arrangements are also in progress with representative dramatists of Spain, Italy, and other countries. Further translations have been promised by Dr. GARNETT, Messrs. WALTER LEAF, JUSTIN HUNTLY MACCARTHY, G. A. GREENE, etc.




APR 11 1906
JUL 30 1906
AUG 22 1906
SEP 25 1906


23498.24
Two stage plays /
Widener Library
003652929
3 2044 086 869 021